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A VIEW

OF THE

BRAHMINICAL RELIGION,

IN ITS

CONFIRMATION OF THE TRUTH

OF THE

Sacred History,

AND IN ITS INFLUENCE ON THE

Moral Character;

IN A SERIES OF DISCOURSES,

PREACHED

BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

IN THE YEAR 1809,

AT THE LECTURE FOUNDED BY THE LATE

REV. JOHN BAMPTON, M. A. CANON OF SALISBURY.

By the Rev. I. B. S. CARWITHEN, M. A.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR CADELL AND DAVIES, STRAND; FOR
J. M. GUTCH, BRISTOL; AND FOR
J. PARKER, OXFORD.

1810.

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TO THE MOST NOBLE

RICHARD MARQUIS WELLESLEY, K.G.

ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S PRINCIPAL

SECRETARIES OF STATE.

MY LORD,

THOUGH the inability with which the following Discourses are executed, may bring on me the charge of presumption in selecting a name of such high authority on every question connected with the history and science of the eastern world; yet the motives by which they were suggested, may, in some degree, recommend them to the approbation of Marquis Wellesley.—To no one, my Lord, could they be addressed with so much propriety; since, among the many claims, which a vigorous and splendid administration in India has entailed on public

esteem and gratitude, it is impossible to forget the obligations, which your Lordship's patronage has conferred on oriental literature.

Your Lordship needs not to be informed, of what every scholar must know, that, in a work, confessedly intended for popular use, but on a subject so recondite and diffusive, it was impossible to avoid allusions to many points, on which a wide difference of opinion has excited much intemperance and acrimony. That the ensuing discussion of some of those points, is so temperate, as to compose all difference of opinion, it would be arrogant to hope: but no objector to the principles supported will have reason to complain, that his sentiments have been disguised by misrepresentation, or distorted by prejudice.

In the composition and publication of these discourses, the great object has been, to establish those sound principles, which, while they include the interests of religion and morality, are the basis of all true policy; principles, on which the British constitution in Church and State is founded; and to which alone we must look for domestic peace and security, and for the preservation of empire.

I have the honor to be, with the greatest respect,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obliged,

And most devoted Servant,

I. B. S. CARWITHEN.

MERE, WILTS,
March 31, 1810.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE AUTHOR wishes to observe, respecting the few Notes attached to the present work, that they are principally designed for readers unacquainted with Asiatic literature. They might have been advantageously extended, but the Author was unwilling to add more than were absolutely necessary, until the sense of the public on the value of his performance should be ascertained.

He cannot dismiss the volume without acknowledging his obligations to Doctor FORD, *the Principal of Magdalen Hall, and Lord Almoner's Professor of Arabic, for many valuable remarks; and also for a communication transmitted in the most condescending manner by the learned* BISHOP OF GLOCESTER.

Extract from the last Will and Testament of the late Rev. John Bampton, Canon of Salisbury.

——— "I give and bequeath my Lands and Estates to the "Chancellor, Masters, and Scholars of the University of Oxford for "ever, to have and to hold all and singular the said Lands or Estates "upon trust, and to the intents and purposes hereinafter mentioned; "that is to say, I will and appoint, that the Vice-Chancellor of the "University of Oxford for the time being shall take and receive all "the rents, issues, and profits thereof, and (after all taxes, reparations, "and necessary deductions made) that he pay all the remainder to the "endowment of eight Divinity Lecture Sermons, to be established for "ever in the said University, and to be performed in the manner "following:

"I direct and appoint, that, upon the first Tuesday in Easter term, a "Lecturer be yearly chosen by the Heads of Colleges only, and by no "others, in the room adjoining to the Printing-House, between the "hours of ten in the morning and two in the afternoon, to preach eight "Divinity Lecture Sermons, the year following, at St. Mary's, in "Oxford, between the commencement of the last month in Lent Term, "and the end of the third week in Act Term.

"Also I direct and appoint, that the eight Divinity Lecture Sermons "shall be preached upon either of the following subjects—to confirm "and establish the Christian Faith, and to confute all heretics and "schismatics—upon the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures—upon "the authority of the writings of the primitive Fathers, as to the faith "and practice of the primitive Church—upon the Divinity of our Lord "and Saviour Jesus Christ—upon the Divinity of the Holy Ghost— "upon the Articles of the Christian Faith, as comprehended in the "Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.

"Also I direct, that thirty copies of the eight Divinity Lecture "Sermons shall be always printed, within two months after they are "preached, and one copy shall be given to the Chancellor of the "University, and one copy to the Head of every College, and one copy "to the Mayor of the City of Oxford, and one copy to be put into the "Bodleian Library; and the expence of printing them shall be paid "out of the revenue of the Lands or Estates given for establishing the "Divinity Lecture Sermons; and the Preacher shall not be paid, nor "be entitled to the revenue, before they are printed.

"Also I direct and appoint, that no person shall be qualified to preach "the Divinity Lecture Sermons, unless he hath taken the Degree of "Master of Arts at least, in one of the two Universities of Oxford or "Cambridge; and that the same person shall never preach the "Divinity Lecture Sermons twice."

ERRATA.

Page 25,	line	6,	*for* Purdnas *read* Purânas
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241,		2,	*for* division *read* divisions
263,		10,	*for* unlimitted *read* unlimited
272,		28,	*for* ancestor *read* ancestors
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DISCOURSE I.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE BRAHMINICAL SYSTEM.

Introduction—Sketch of the History of Hindoostan as connected with religion—Authenticity of the Védas—Probable antiquity of the Védas—Of the Puránas and other sacred records of the Brahmins—Design of the following Discourses.

DISCOURSE I.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE BRAHMINICAL SYSTEM.

MALACHI, C. 1. V. 11.

From the rising of the sun, unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place, incense shall be offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the Heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts.

IN contemplating the scheme of ancient prophecy, there is no circumstance which bears a stronger evidence of divine inspiration, than the universality of design, by which it stands essentially distinguished from the legal and ceremonial parts of the Jewish covenant. That "salvation is of the Jews" forms indeed a leading doctrine, both of the Law and of the Prophets. But the law being subservient to the great "mystery of godliness" to be revealed in a future age, was intended by the peculiarity of its rites, and the contracted practicability of its ordinances, to separate a single nation, from the idolatrous worship which overspread the world. Its injunctions

therefore, when practised with scrupulous rigor, were calculated to form a temper sullen and unsocial; and its promises, when interpreted by supercilious vanity, eventually contributed to foster a spirit of practical intolerance. Different however were the views, and more important was the commission, of the Prophets of the Lord of Hosts. Commanded to proclaim "the glad tidings of salvation" to all the nations of the earth, they were guided by none of those motives which commonly, and sometimes laudably, regulate human conduct. Those venerable characters, "who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," exhibit a disposition equally distant from unfeeling bigotry, interested concealment, or servile adulation. Through all their predictions concerning the future condition of the chosen people of God, in which enthusiasm or imposture might have successfully administered to the gratification of any selfish or sinister passion, there is nothing to inflame the restless cupidity of national ambition, and little to soothe even the honest prejudices of national attachment. With equal boldness they chastise the rebellious spirit of their countrymen, and the vices and corruptions of the idolatrous kingdoms around them: with no less freedom, they predict the desolation of Jerusalem, and the subjugation of its inhabi-

tants to a foreign yoke; than they threaten destruction to the power of Babylon, or dissipation to the wealth of Tyre. Far from describing the perpetuity of the Jewish law, they announce its future abolition: far from excluding any portion of mankind from a participation in the divine favor, they anticipate with rapture, the period when that favor shall be impartially and universally displayed; when the operations of grace shall be commensurate with the economy of nature; and when even the apparent inequality in the distribution of natural blessings, shall be corrected by a uniform dispensation of religious knowledge, of the terms of acceptance, and of the hopes of reward.

The accomplishment of predictions like these presents a state, alike suited to the wants of man, and congenial with the attributes of a wise and benevolent Creator; and we cannot sometimes forbear to wonder at the infatuation of that people, who could wrest them into pledges of temporal aggrandisement. Nor can we repress our surprize, that while they literally applied to themselves those magnificent promises, which describe the future dominion of Zion, they should have forgotten, that all her spiritual subjects were to be admitted to an enjoyment of the same privileges;

and that while they thus exulted in the prospect of universal empire, they should have obstructed the diffusion of religious truth.

When therefore the professors of the Christian faith refer those passages of the Jewish prophets to the mission of Him, who declared that his "kingdom is not of this world," whatever opinion may be formed concerning the propriety of such a reference, their adversaries must admit that the application is urged with consistency. They must acknowledge that the distinguishing mark of the dispensation contained in the Gospel, is not to withhold, but to communicate instruction; and that the benefits which it proposes to confer, are extended to the whole human race.

The Religion of Christ thus universal in its design and efficacy, fairly and openly asserts this pre-eminence, and its exclusive right to the title of a divine revelation: and though avowedly tolerant of error, never confounds the distinctions between error and truth. Contrary to the spirit of other religious systems, which insist on mutual candour, only because they are deformed by mutual imperfections; Christianity can generously grant that indulgence, which she needs not to ask; but, while she yields, and cheerfully yields,

to ignorance and infirmity, her forbearance is disgraced by no evasive compromise, no pusillanimous concession. If Paganism, assuming what is falsely called liberality of sentiment, but what is, in reality, nothing more than laxity of principle, can boast of inculcating the dangerously popular maxim, that every mode of faith is equally indifferent and acceptable to the Deity; that "the Supreme Being is sometimes employed "with the attendant on the mosque in counting "the sacred beads, and sometimes at the temple "in the adoration of idols, the intimate of the "Mussulman, and the friend of the Indian, the "companion of the Christian, and the confidant "of the Jew;"[a] evangelical morality dictates the less accommodating, but more philosophical aphorism, that "God is a spirit, and they who "worship him, must worship him in spirit and "in truth." Although Prophecy contemplating, from the Christian Pisgah that delightful harmony, which shall hereafter prevail throughout universal nature, by a sublime figure represents it as extending even to the animal world, and causing the wolf to lie down with the lamb; this cannot be understood to prefigure a forced association of physical antipathies, a monstrous

[a] Preliminary Discourse of the Brahmans to the Code of Gentoo Laws, p. 4, 4to. edition, 1776.

alliance between timid innocence and savage ferocity. A previous change must be effected in those passions, which now engender hatred, discord, and contention, before that general tranquillity can take place, which these dispositions must necessarily prevent. Every valley must be exalted, and every mountain and hill must be made low; the aberrations of the understanding, and the obliquities of the will, must be rectified, before "truth shall flourish in the earth, and righteousness descend from heaven."

Against this claim of universal extension however, on which the Gospel so peremptorily and steadily insists, objections are frequently opposed, that it is both doubtful as a question of expediency, and false as a matter of fact.

While some have strenuously denied this aptitude in Christianity to assimilate every age and country to itself, and its efficacy in counteracting the effects of natural temperament, of climate, and of education; others have adduced its present very limited and partial establishment, as a proof, that this pretension must be founded on a strained interpretation of allegorical passages, rather than on any solid conclusions, drawn from reason and experience. Although such a persuasion may,

it is thought, be harmlessly indulged, when permitted to vent itself in the deep, but quiet aspirations of devotional abstraction; yet when sufficiently powerful to operate on practice, and to animate exertion, being founded on error, it must, like every other error produce evils, proportioned to its magnitude. An exclusive attachment to a particular mode of faith, in a state of quiescence generates the overweening reserve of the anchorite; but stimulated into action, and armed with authority, kindles the boisterous zeal, and sanguinary fury, of the bigot.

These objections, which are always eagerly espoused by unbelievers, who are in the habit of classing the Christian Religion with the various delusions, which have successively captivated the public mind, have been supposed to derive additional weight, from a survey of the religious opinions prevalent throughout the eastern world. Divided into empires of vast extent and grandeur, inhabited by an immense population, its conquerers have always preserved and still continue to preserve, their superiority, rather by the expedients of political wisdom, than by the force of arms. But if its inhabitants must yield the palm of intellectual strength, in many of the arts of refinement they have maintained a decided superiority;

and wherever European power has enslaved their bodies, the European mind itself has generally received a bias, and European habits have taken their complexion, from the fascinating and luxurious manners of Asiatic climates. On subjects connected with legislation and government, the liberal spirit of European policy has often been contracted, and subdued, by the refinements of Eastern despotism. In matters of religious belief, which must always have a powerful influence on the moral character, this result has been still more conspicuous; and the pure and simple faith of the western world, has been too frequently weakened and confounded by the imposing dogmata of oriental superstition.

The various forms of religion predominant in the east have also acquired a higher degree of importance, and occupied a greater share of attention, from their connection with the history and science of a people, whose interests are so intimately blended with those of the British empire; a people, who while they have for a series of ages borne with unresisting apathy the yoke of servitude, under so many different masters, have stubbornly repelled any attempted innovation, and every imposed restriction, on those peculiar tenets which they have so long revered,

That the warlike tribes of Arabia and Tartary, who have sent out from their bosom, conquerors to invade, to subdue, or to convert the rest of the earth, should have retained vestiges of their ancient customs and traditions, might be reasonably expected; but that the peaceful natives of Hindoostan, under the most sanguinary persecutions, as well as under the milder influence of persuasion, should have preserved the prominent features of their ancient character unworn by this attrition, is a fact, which while it causes admiration, must afford an ample field for speculation and research.

To the expedition of Alexander, who opened the knowledge of India to Europe, we are naturally prompted to look, for the earliest information respecting the manners of its inhabitants.

Whatever defects may be found in the Grecian historians, with respect to their geographical knowledge, defects, arising both from their difficulty in obtaining local information, and from the structure of their language, which caused them to reject many foreign terms, as barbarous and dissonant; yet to their faithful accuracy in the delineation of manners, the experience and observation of modern times, have afforded abundant and honourable testimony.

In those authors who have recorded the actions of the Macedonian conqueror, and particularly in the works of Arrian, which, although written after the declension of Attic taste and elegance, are not unworthy of a purer age; we recognize many of those distinctive marks, which, at this day are attached to the followers of the religion of Brahmà. We are also informed that even at a period so remote from the present, their religion exhibited proofs of long establishment. Their division into separate tribes or castes, by which a community in religious worship, as well as in social intercourse, was restricted, together with the peculiar immunities arrogated by the sacerdotal order, are described with a clearness and precision, which it might be thought impossible for ignorance to misapprehend, or for ingenuity to pervert. But in the representations which are given of the simplicity of their worship, and particularly of their total abhorrence from idolatry, there is not less reason to conclude, that their faith has suffered some remarkable deviations from its original purity.

From the time when the successors of Alexander ceased to maintain an immediate communication with India, a wide chasm occurs in its history.

It was during this interval, however, that a wonderful change was effected in the opinions of mankind by the introduction of a religion, of which, if the purity of its doctrines attested by incontrovertible miracles prove the divine origin, its propagation by means so utterly inadequate, and to human reason contemptible, no less demonstrates the intervention of divine agency. The command which its divine author gave to his disciples: "Go ye into all the world and preach "the Gospel to every creature," was so punctually fulfilled, if not in the letter, yet as to the spirit and design, that in comparison with the triumphs, obtained by a few artless and illiterate men, not only without the assistance of all human power, but in direct opposition to it, the conquests of the Macedonian hero, either in magnitude or difficulty, shrink into insignificance. Within the short period of fifty years from the death of Christ, the sound of his Gospel had, almost literally, "gone forth into all lands, and "its words unto the ends of the world." It had been heard in the porticos of Athens, and in the pagodas of India. It had been enabled by its native strength to subdue the fierce and inhospitable Parthian, and combat the wit and eloquence of the Roman court. It was equally successful, whether opposed to the metaphysical subtleties

of the philosopher, or to the grosser and more palpable absurdities of vulgar superstition.

In that division of the distant portions of the habitable world, which was made by the Apostles at their separation, the immense provinces of the greater Asia extending eastward from the Euphrates to the Indus, were assigned to the ministry of Saint Thomas. The tradition which relates, that his pious labors were extended beyond this boundary, and which is confirmed by the testimony of the best ecclesiastical historians, though rejected by some modern writers, has been placed by subsequent research still farther beyond the reach of contradiction or rational doubt.[b]

From recent information however, supported by the concurrent voice of past ages, we are warranted in drawing the conclusion, that the Gospel was preached in India, during the first and purest ages of the Church. For the following facts we have undeniable evidence; that, in the middle of the fourth century, Frumentius was appointed by Athanasius Bishop of India, where he found the doctrines of the Christian faith understood, and practised by a great number; and these are represented, in the fifth century, to

[b] See on this subject, Cave Sæc. 8, in Manessi 2

have considerably increased in wealth and importance.[c] But the primitive purity of the Christian religion was soon afterwards corrupted, by the introduction of the Nestorian heresy from Persia, and in the course of a few ages, the principles of that sect became almost universally prevalent.

To what extent the pure tenets of the Christian faith might have been professed in Hindoostan, or what latent effects its corruptions, and the introduction of the various apocryphal Gospels, which found their way into the east, might have produced on the religion of the inhabitants, it would be inconsistent with the brevity of this historical sketch to discuss. We are now reluctantly compelled to turn our eyes to a different picture. We are now called on to mark the progress of a religion, not, like the former, pursuing a course silent and tranquil, observable only by the blessings which it dispenses; but, like a torrent, overwhelming every obstacle that opposed its fury. The useful labors of the Christian saint, scarcely find a place in history, and they are chiefly recalled to our recollection, by the strains of a Poet equally conspicuous for piety of sentiment and sublimity of diction.[d] But the

[c] Euseb. l. 2. c. 1. Sozomen. l. 2. c. 24. Socrat. l. 1. c. 29.
[d] See the Lusiad of Camoens, B. 10.

"Star of Islamism" is too banefully portentous to be forgotten. The triumphs of the Arabian impostor are indelibly written in characters of blood.

In the seventh century, his followers first attempted to plant the Mohammedan faith, in the country of Hindoostan; in the south, under the mask of friendship; in the north, by the terror of the sword. Through the whole course of their conquests, whether conducted by the insatiable avarice of Mammood, or by the ferocious courage of Timur, we behold the same wanton insult, and licentious barbarity. Religion was the pretext, and plunder the object, by which they were impelled, and both co-operated in the work of destruction. What could not tempt the rapacity of the one, was sacrificed to the zeal of the other. While the possessions of the unoffending inhabitants were ravaged and their persons violated by brutal lust, their temples were polluted, and their altars overthrown, by the relentless hand of blind fanaticism.

To the reign of the illustrious Acber, which forms the only truly brilliant epoch in the Mussulman empire of India, we must look for a different system of policy, adopted both from expediency and inclination. By him it was first

discovered, that the security of his government, and the happiness of his subjects, could never be promoted, but on the basis of universal toleration: and thus, while his desire of knowledge, incited him to examine, and to compare the different forms of religion, which had been established in his extensive dominions, his moderation taught him equally to protect the exercise of all.

But the period had now arrived, when the Mohammedan power, which, during the space of more than eight centuries, had exerted the most despotic tyranny over the East, and had become formidable to the whole world, was to receive a check, by the discovery of the maritime passage to India; a discovery, which not only opened a new direction to Asiatic commerce, but, which as has been remarked, with a warmth of expression not exceeding the soberness of truth, preserved the liberties of mankind.*

In reviewing the history of those important events, which have decided the fate of empires, and of those splendid achievements which have ultimately contributed to general happiness and prosperity, we have often reason to lament, that they have been effected by means at which

* Abbé Raynal.

humanity revolts. We must be compelled to acknowledge, that the soil in which "the vine and the fig tree" have afterwards flourished in the greatest luxuriancy, has been fertilized by blood. But the voyage of Gama is one of those occurrences, on which the mind dwells with more unmingled pleasure.

When the kingdom of Portugal first established its settlements in the East under his direction, its conquests were marked by none of those enormities, which have so often disgraced those nations, who from motives of avarice or ambition have planted distant colonies. The earliest missionaries also, who laboured to convert the natives of India, were actuated by the purest intentions, and prosecuted them by the most laudable means.[f]

It was not till about fifty years afterwards, when the Jesuits undertook the task, that a different method was pursued. The lust of secular power was the motive which influenced all their attempts; and to this, the precepts of their religion were made to yield. While they compelled the Christians whom they found established in the southern parts of Malabar to abjure the tenets of their ancient creed, and to acknowledge the

[f] Particularly Cubilones the confessor of Gama.

authority of the Papal see; they sought to acquire an ascendancy over the followers of Paganism, by a ready compliance with their favourite prejudices. Whithersoever they came, their principal care was, to discover the popular objects of fear and adoration; and thus by contradicting none of these, they insured a temporary success. If the sun were esteemed the fountain of life, and the source from which all human blessings were derived; they represented Jesus Christ as descended from that luminary, and themselves as his younger brethren, sent to give light to the ignorant. If their idolatrous hearers were in dread of exorcism, and of the machinations of evil spirits; they declared that the sole object of the mission of Christ, was to destroy demoniacal agency; that he had subdued its influence in Europe, and that they were sent by him into the East, to complete his benevolent design. Thus by a literal application of that favourite maxim of their political founder, distorted from the meaning of St. Paul, "to the clean all things are clean;"—innumerable proselytes of the lowest castes were gained, whose tenets were composed of some of the peculiar and mysterious doctrines of the Gospel, engrafted on their own impure and fanciful mythology.

But although the empire of the Portuguese in India, was originally established on those principles of equity and moderation which alone can ensure stability and permanence; yet to these succeeded a deliberate scheme of rapine and extortion, which led to its destruction. At the commencement of their enormities, it was pointedly observed of them, that they were "among men what lions were among beasts, and for that reason nature had appointed their species to be equally few." But when luxury began to enervate their manners, these sentiments were changed. "They now conquer Asia, but Asia will soon conquer them," was the consolation of an Indian prince; a prediction, which the event fully justified. The jealousies and dissensions which weakened their internal government, as well as their external means of defence, afforded to other nations an opportunity of participating in those advantages, to which the Portuguese claimed an exclusive right; and at length transferred to the British empire, the possession of one of the most fertile parts of the habitable globe.

Under the dominion of all these different powers, the design of controlling the religious opinions of their colonial subjects, and of superseding their present tenets, has been prosecuted

by different means, and with different degrees of ardor. The spirit of conversion has sometimes burst forth in the well-intended, but mistaking, efforts of wild enthusiasm: it has sometimes, though rarely, glowed with the warmth of genuine piety; it has sometimes, almost entirely, subsided in the effervescence of worldly interest and political contention.

From this short view of Indian history, as it stands connected with religion, we are naturally led to inquire more minutely, into the nature of that system, which has thus preserved some of its most striking peculiarities, amidst so many and calamitous revolutions. We have seen it brought into contact with Christianity, under every form, in a state of purity, and in a state of corruption. We have seen it assailed by all the virulence of Mohammedan bigotry, a religion, we might suppose, still more palatable to the slothful and luxurious. Yet its most striking lineaments still remain unchanged. That it has experienced some alterations and corruptions, there is no room for doubt, when we advert to the accounts which ancient history has given of its tenets; but they are such changes as must have been almost unavoidably introduced into any system of faith, in which the sacerdotal order is

the only depositary of the sacred oracles, and possesses the sole arbitration of all differences in religious disputes. While the Brahmins continue a sect, those motives which invariably actuate human nature under similar circumstances, a zeal for their own privileges, and a regard for national honor, will prompt them to impose such doctrines on their followers, and to gloss over their philosophy when laid before strangers, in the manner best adapted to promote their interested designs.

In forming a general idea of the Brahminical system, the first circumstance which strikes the mind of the enquirer, is, its difference from every other form of oriental Paganism, Its tenets essentially diversified from those of the Zoroastrian school, with which they have sometimes been improperly confounded; and not less diversified from those of the religion of Boodh, from which they afterwards received an admixture, present a subject, for contemplation, at once novel, and interesting.

To aid our researches in this enquiry we are furnished with singular advantages. The doctrines of Brahminism are not to be estimated solely from the comparison and concentration of foreign testimony, which may be prejudiced, or

from the evidence of oral tradition, which must be uncertain; but its principles are more fully developed in the great body of Sanscrit literature. This literature has been celebrated by the philologist as being written in a language of wonderful copiousness, and of exquisite refinement; it has been studied by the metaphysician, as containing an elaborate system of abstruse philosophy; it has been admired by the moralist, for the elevated tone and impassioned sublimity of its ethical maxims. In each of these different points of view this grand source of oriental knowledge must be interesting; and we must consider it, not only as the parent of most of the dialects of Asia, but as having extended far beyond the confines of the eastern world. But its value is enhanced, when we reflect that this language is esteemed of celestial origin, and that its characters have been appropriated to convey to distant ages those sacred oracles, to which the Hindoos refer as a formulary of faith, and as a rule of moral conduct.

With respect to the authenticity and antiquity of those records, and to the degree of credit which they may claim, various and contradictory opinions have been entertained. While in the true spirit of fiction and romance, they are represented

by the Brahmins themselves as having existed before the creation of the world; and while they are supposed by many Europeans to be of an earlier date than any history now extant, they have been unwarrantably stigmatized, by others, as the forgeries of modern artifice, and even their existence has afforded a subject of debate.

That the sacred volumes of the Hindoos are genuine, that those compositions, which are now received under the title of the Védas, are the same with those which have been received as such, for a number of ages, we have the best of evidence to prove: that species of evidence which is generally deemed conclusive in determining the credit of any ancient production; that species of evidence to which we ourselves confidently appeal, whenever the genuineness of our own scriptures is called in question. In the recitation of them, the metre is preserved with scrupulous exactness, though the sense be apparently neglected, a practice which effectually secures them from interpolation: they are explained, and commented on by a multitude of annotators of different ages, whose extracts agree with the original text as it now stands: they are quoted by writers on subjects, not professedly religious, but in treatises on law, medicine, astronomy, and gram-

mar: and what is still more decisive to the purpose, the writings of heretical sects exhibit quotations from them, which admit their genuineness, although they deny their doctrines and authority.

The authenticity of the Púrdnas, and of the other sacred writings of the Brahmins, which, though not esteemed of the same transcendent excellence as the Védas, are yet acknowledged by them to be of divine origin, cannot be said to rest on the same immoveable foundation. But, although in some instances, additions and interpolations may have been detected, there are still sufficient proofs to shew, that they are a compilation from valuable materials, which now no longer exist, or from traditions of unquestionable antiquity.

For determining the exact period when the Hindoo records were written, or even when their different portions were collected into one body, no facts have yet been established which can lead to a certain decision. Attempts have been made to ascertain this point from the few detached hints which they supply respecting the position of the constellations in the heavens, at the æra, in which they profess to have been written.

It has been, still more unsuccessfully, attempted by the unauthorised assumption, that the variations in all languages, and therefore in the Sanscrit language have taken place in times very nearly proportional; and that by ascertaining the age of some modern production, we may be enabled to fix the age of another more ancient, by retrograde calculation. The date of these records has however, not without plausible reason, been placed at a period, anterior to any other written monuments of profane history; and has indeed been carried, by some, far beyond the time of the Jewish legislator.

But whatever sentiments may be entertained, respecting the comparative antiquity of the Brahminical records, and of that history which we believe to be the production of inspired truth, these can in no degree affect the credibility of the latter. The priority of time is not a question worthy of controversy; but we turn with an anxious eye to discover how far these venerable monuments of eastern literature, confirm, or disprove, the narrative, which our own Scriptures give, concerning the early periods of the world.

And here, with pleasure we observe, that additional light has been reflected on the Mosai-

cal history, and its correctness and fidelity have been more fully vindicated. The coincidence and corroborative testimony are also perfectly undesigned, and such as could not have taken place, if they had been occasioned by interested forgeries. They have been found to exist likewise, in instances, where infidelity had expected to gain a signal triumph by wounding Christianity through the sides of Judaism.

In attempting to fulfill the design, which the Founder of this Lecture appears to have contemplated; that these annual Discourses should supply a refutation of some popular objections against the Christian faith, no subject perhaps, could be selected, more important, and, at the present crisis, more generally interesting, than that which is now proposed for discussion. Infidelity continually changes her weapons of annoyance, and therefore the Christian champion varies his mode of defence; and by watching with solicitude the fluctuation of prevailing opinion he is better enabled to counteract both speculative error and vicious practice.

It will be the design of the former part of the following Discourses, to collect some of the principal, and more obvious, proofs, which the Brah-

minical records have afforded, in confirmation of the Mosaical writings; and as the whole code of our national religion, has been asserted to depend on the truth of the eleven introductory chapters of the Book of Genesis, any additional evidences in support of their credibility, cannot but be deemed an important acquisition to our common faith.

The first object which will claim attention, in the prosecution of this enquiry, is, the chronology of the Brahmins, drawn both from their astronomical calculations, and from their history: and it will be shewn, that their scheme, far from invalidating, will confirm the sacred chronology. Advancing from negative to positive proofs, a disquisition will succeed, on the striking correspondence of the Sancrit records, with the Mosaical account of the deluge, and on the peculiar circumstances, which render this coincidence of more than common value. The next object worthy of regard, is the Mosaical account of the origin and settlement of nations, which will be corroborated by the geography of the Púránas, joined with testimonies incidentally collected from other ancient writers. This investigation will finally conduct us to those traces, which may yet be discovered in the corrupted mythology of the Hindoos,

decidedly pointing to a higher origin, and shewing the derivation of many of their religious opinions from those primeval traditions which were common to all mankind.

But these instances of similarity between the Mosaical and Hindoo records, and especially of the agreement between many of the Jewish and Brahminical ceremonies; a circumstance which cannot fail to strike the most inattentive observer, and which caused the learned Hyde hastily to pronounce, that Brahmà was no other than the patriarch Abraham,[s] has given rise to another opinion, that the Christian and Hindoo codes of faith may claim an origin equally divine; that Christ, the only-begotten of the Father, has probably appeared, at different periods of time, in different parts of the world, under various denominations, and in different forms of humanity. And while these pretensions have been industriously supported by the blind admirers of oriental superstition, they have been ostensibly acknowledged by others, who equally disbelieve whatever bears the name of Divine revelation, but who, by elevating Paganism, endeavour to depress Christianity. To support this opinion, the principles of morality, which the Brahminical religion

[s] Hyde Vet. Rel. Pers. p. 21.

inculcates, have been extolled, as calculated to produce the most sublime virtue, and the purest felicity. While those absurdities, which could not be entirely concealed, have been defended by attributing similar defects and abuses to every other revelation which professes to be derived from God, the great body of their institutions has been represented as containing the essence of the most comprehensive wisdom and refined policy.

It is a fact which deserves attention, that while those abuses, which have been introduced into our religion, through the unworthiness of its nominal professors, are often reprehended with the most intemperate acrimony, and unfairly attached to the religion itself; the more flagrant enormities inseparably connected with polytheism, and committed under its express sanction, have been sometimes defended by the most futile arguments, and rarely chastised with the severity which they deserve. That this conduct has, in every instance, proceeded from disingenuous motives, would be a harsh assertion. The cause may rather be discovered in that propensity, which exists in human nature, to swell those evils which come immediately under its notice into a false appearance of magnitude. The fatal con-

sequences resulting from an abuse of Christianity, have approached us near enough to cause alarm. The practical effects of Paganism are so far removed, as only to excite curiosity: and those calamities on which curiosity can pause to speculate, seldom give birth to violent emotions. Superstition is a spectre, whose deformity like all others diminishes by distance. Her icy touch petrifies, and her features on a minute inspection inspire disgust. But when she recedes farther from the view, or is seen by a fainter light, the rigidity of her countenance insensibly softens, and even assumes a specious expression of awful majesty. Thus, the unnatural penances of the inhabitant of La Trappe are never mentioned, but with secret contempt, or with sarcastic ridicule: while the equally absurd, and more painful austerities of the Indian devotee, have been venerated as acts of exalted heroism, and of sublime piety. We are fired with indignation at the cruelties of inquisitorial tyranny, or the impurities which have been practised under the mask of monachism; but who recoils with equal horror, or whose cheek flushes with equal resentment, when memory recalls the shrieks of the victims in the wicker image of Woden, or the licentious rites which have been celebrated in the caverns of Salsette and Elephanta?

A habit of thinking so natural, but so erroneous, has, when applied to the religion of the Hindoos, been indulged to an extent highly alarming. It is proposed therefore, in the latter part of these Discourses, to state the effects, which the Brahminical system is calculated to produce on the moral character. In order to judge accurately of these, it is by no means sufficient to cull out a few detached fragments of sublime morality, from the voluminous mass of puerile detail, to mark the scattered scintillations which occasionally gleam through the surrounding darkness; but it is requisite to take an enlarged view of the system, in its direct and necessary tendencies.

This view may properly be ranged under three distinct heads: the first, will comprehend those doctrines, which the religion of the Brahmins inculcates, concerning the Deity, operating on man both as a preservative of moral purity, and as a source of happiness: the second, will be directed to the influence of their religious institutions on the intellectual faculties: the third, will include their effects on the social feelings, and their tendency to promote universal benevolence.

The conclusions, which must necessarily result from this investigation, while they collaterally display the superior excellence of that revelation, which professes to have the "promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come," will also assist in demonstrating, that the universal extension, which true believers claim for Christianity, is neither the cunningly devised fable of political artifice, nor the feverish dream of enthusiastic idiotcy; but a conviction, founded on rational grounds, not only on the divine promise, but on the wisdom and benevolence of God.

Irreconcileable indeed will it appear to these attributes of the Deity, from any conclusions of natural reason, that so large a portion of his creatures should be excluded from the knowledge of him. The fundamental doctrine of the Gospel, that the blessings of redemption are extended to all mankind, even to those who have never heard of their efficacy, is the only satisfactory reason, which can be given for this seeming partiality in the ways of Providence. But the ways of Providence are more fully vindicated by a belief, that ignorance and error shall, hereafter, be banished from the earth; that the whole human race shall not only enjoy the benefits, but be made acquainted with the terms of the Christian

covenant; and that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

In what manner this great revolution will be effected, or how far it will be effected by human means, it is not our province to determine: it should be rather our firm persuasion that this event will take place in spite of human opposition. Whether the powers of this world may be eager to diffuse the blessings of religious truth, or solicitous to repress them; whether regardless of petty and partial interests they may labour to disseminate useful knowledge, and thereby augment the sum of human happiness; or whether guided by a cold and timid policy they may endeavour to stunt the growth of the intellectual powers, and to erect their empire on the ruins of human reason, is of small importance. It is of importance indeed to themselves considered as moral and accountable agents, but not as it regards the accomplishment of the divine will.

It should be our firm conviction, that he who causes the fierceness of man to turn to his praise, can render even a crusade of infidelity an instrument of propagating his word. It should be our unshaken belief, that all the revolutions in this

lower world are preparatory to that eventful period, when the kingdoms of this world shall "become the kingdoms of the Lord and his Christ." It should be our confident expectation, that the time approaches when the Son of God will exalt his banner the cross, and behold all nations bow before it! The ark of the covenant does it homage; the crescent of Mohammed falls prostrate; the statues of Paganism bow their heads and crumble into dust. Under every part of Heaven the incense of grateful adoration ascends to the throne of divine grace unclouded by superstition and error, and "a pure offering" is then offered on the altar of Him, who shall command "a willing people in the day of his power," the pure offering of sincere & unreserved obedience, that offering which constitutes the nature of our spiritual sacrifice, of that sacrifice which is declared to be our only "reasonable service.'

DISCOURSE II.

ON THE CHRONOLOGICAL SYSTEM OF THE BRAHMINS, IN ITS CONNECTION WITH THE SACRED CHRONOLOGY.

Early Proficiency in Astronomical Science—Antiquity of Nations, or of the World not determinable by the gradual Progression of Knowledge—The Brahminical Chronology shewn to be of modern Invention—External Evidence—Internal Evidence—Origin of the Zodiacal Signs—Astronomy not an infallible Criterion when applied to Chronology.

DISCOURSE II.

ON THE CHRONOLOGICAL SYSTEM OF THE BRAHMINS, IN ITS CONNECTION WITH THE SACRED CHRONOLOGY.

JOB, c. 38. v. 31, 32, 33.

Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his seasons, or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? Knowest thou the ordinances of Heaven, canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?

WHEN man was first formed after the image of God, to him was granted the distinguishing prerogative of elevating his views towards those regions, which have been emphatically styled the residence of the Deity; not that the presence of the Supreme Being is circumscribed or confined to any place, but that the Heavens more conspicuously display the impalpable splendor of the divine majesty, and the immensity of creative power.

The contemplation of the heavenly bodies has therefore constituted both the delight and the employment of mankind from the earliest times; nor can the period be pointed out, when their operations were either unknown or disregarded.

Whatever difference of opinion may be entertained concerning the precise age of that dramatic poem the Book of Job; yet universal consent has determined it to be a production of high antiquity; and in the passage now selected, out of many others, there are evident traces of the proficiency which then obtained in astronomical speculations. Objects must have become generally familiar, before Poetry could have seized and appropriated them to herself: for without a long revolution in the mind, scientific images cannot acquire that polish, which renders them capable of adding brilliancy to language, and that ductility, by which they readily yield to the powers of the imagination.

In the countries of the East, where the serenity of the climate is peculiarly favourable to the observation of the celestial luminaries, we might naturally expect to discover an early attention to their magnitude and their motions. It was by their periodical revolutions indeed, that the necessary concerns of human life were formerly regu-

lated. The constellations were not only in after-times rendered subservient to the purposes of a blind and trembling superstition; they were not only regarded with emotions of fear or transport, as they were supposed to bear an aspect malignant or auspicious to the interests of man; but they were originally instrumental to more useful and more noble ends: they directed the course of agricultural labours and of maritime adventure. Astronomy instead of being the offspring of solitude, leisure and contemplation,[a] may be termed more properly the child of necessity and of nature. The simple occupations of pastoral life, not less than the uninterrupted repose of philosophical abstraction, the plains of Chaldæa, as well as the observatories of Egypt, were favourable to its cultivation.

From this intimate acquaintance with some of the most abstruse parts of mathematical science, which we know to have obtained in a period so remote, a popular objection has been raised against the very limited duration, which the Mosaic history assigns to the age of the world. These eminent acquisitions are thought to be inconsistent with society in its infant state; they must

[a] C'est la science du repos, de la solitude et de la jouissance de soi-meme. Bailli histoire del'astronomie ancienne, p. 2.

have resulted from long and diligent observation, and from gradual improvements on former discoveries.

Whenever we attempt to remove this difficulty, by replying that man, in his original state, as formed by his Creator, was alike distinguished by intellectual and corporeal excellence; or, that the extended term of antediluvian existence was singularly favourable to geometrical and astronomical researches; the solution however satisfactory, is derived from facts, which our adversaries will refuse to admit. We must therefore examine the validity of the objection itself, and of the principle on which it is founded.

And here, if we may be allowed to argue from the history of those nations which are best known, we may be fully justified in the assertion, that no criterion is more fallacious in determining their antiquity, than any calculations which can be drawn from the gradual and successive improvements of science. Knowledge has never been known to increase according to any fixed rule of progression, at any two given periods of equal duration. Even the finer arts, which are supposed to be inseparably connected with the progress of civilization and refinement, have been

cultivated with an astonishing degree of success in very distant ages. Neither have they been perfected by slow and measured advances; but the efforts of some happy genius, or a coincidence of other fortunate circumstances, has generally given them an energetic and instantaneous growth. Sculpture and painting were suddenly raised to excellence in Greece, by the taste of Praxiteles and Apelles; arts, which their immediate predecessors found rude, and destitute of grace. Who can trace the infancy of epic poetry? In Homer we see it at once elevated to full maturity and vigor.

But the perfection of the fine arts, and of many other branches of knowledge, if not demonstrative of the precise antiquity of any particular nation, may yet be considered as affording an indication of the existing state of society and manners. The intricate subtleties of juridical distinction can have no place, unless where a complex system of property has been introduced. The artificial rules of eloquence would never have been formed, unless in a state of society, where the art of moving the passions had been found advantageous.

In many of those branches of knowledge however, which depend on geometrical science,

even this criterion fails. As the principles on which they are founded are immutable, there is less room for improvement. More than any others, they appear to be the effects of intuitive perception; and sublime as they are, our experience may convince us, that the greatest eminence has been attained in them, by minds, which had received no illumination from the knowledge of others, and which in other respects, were rude and uncultivated. Neither can we allege any cause why the most profound discoveries should be made at one time, more than at another. We can assign no reason why the law of gravitation might not have been discovered by Archimedes, as well as by Newton; though we can assign a reason why the pleadings of Isæus, or the orations of Demosthenes, could not have been composed, but in an acute and enlightened age.

If indeed the instruction, which the Deity has afforded to man, were a matter of probable proof, and not of certain observation, it would, in many instances, be rejected as incredible. That the general laws of matter, and that the operations of the heavenly bodies, should be so much better known, than many other subjects with which human life seems more nearly concerned; that we should be able to unfold the secrets of the

skies, while the most impenetrable veil covers the whole process of vegetation, is a fact, which, although we may be unable to resolve it, is too evident to admit of controversy, and may be sufficient to shew, how little we are qualified to estimate the nature and the extent of the intellectual powers.

Admitting then, from what experience has taught concerning the mental faculties, that this early proficiency in geometrical science may be easily reconciled; we shall find without surprize, that, among the various celestial phænomena, which engaged attention, the slow revolution by which the fixed stars complete their circuit, forms a discovery in the ancient history of astronomy. This motion was clearly ascertained by the oldest observers of the heavens, however they might differ from their successors in their computations concerning the time in which this revolution was performed, or whatever might be the cause of that difference. This presumed æra, as it constituted the basis on which many of the eastern nations have founded their pretensions to antiquity, has also given rise to a number of religious dogmata, resulting from an allegorical interpretation of the fact. Hence the old Egyptian notion, that at the end of thirty-six thousand years, every man was

to resume all the circumstances of his present life, which were to happen exactly the same in every contingency. Hence the opinion of a moral renovation of the world, and the restitution of all things to their original purity. Hence those fictitious æras of the Brahmins and Mandarins, their periods of millions of years, and the worlds which they assert are already past, and will succeed each other in endless rotation.

The vanity, incidental to all nations, of claiming a celestial descent, has induced them to conceal their origin in unfathomable antiquity; and this desire has been aided by nothing so much, as by conclusions drawn from these fanciful calculations. When the light of true history becomes indistinct, and when even the fertile stores which mythology has supplied, are exhausted; it is by these, that periods of immense duration are formed, which increase the amount of time to an extent, as boundless as the human imagination. That these periods are too artificially constructed to be real, has been almost universally admitted; and few have attempted to carry them to that extravagant height, which can only be reconciled with the idea of the eternity of the world. But some of these epochs have appeared to be so clearly established, and to be founded on such

indisputable authority, as to furnish a strong ground of objection against the chronological system, which the Mosaical history establishes, and which other historical fragments of profane antiquity, corroborate. Different degrees of credibility have also been attached to the computations of different nations. While the calculations of the Egyptians, and of the Chinese, have been generally given up, as untenable, many of the astronomical æras of the Indian Brahmins have been supposed to display an accuracy, which could not have taken place, unless they had been founded on actual observation. The astonishing progress of the ancient Indians in science, from which their descendants have so far degenerated, appears to indicate the superior accuracy of their system. Their astronomy is found to be more correct the higher we ascend, and its inferiority is the most evident, as we approach the present times: in its original perfection it claims a decided superiority over the system of any other oriental nation.

To any assumptions of superior knowledge, or of early civilization, which India may make, the advocates for the truth of the Mosaical history are by no means disposed to object: because, when understood with proper limitations, they afford

the strongest confirmation of its veracity. They shew that we must look for the first dawnings of intellectual light, in the countries adjacent to the spot, which the concurrent voice of history and tradition represents, as the first abode of man, and the theatre on which the memorable events, that occurred in the infancy of the postdiluvian world, were transacted. They demonstrate the arrogant, and unfounded pretensions of the Greeks and Romans, who represent their ancient progenitors as the immediate descendants of heaven; and who arrogate to themselves the honor of being the inventors of science, as well as the arbiters of taste. The falsehood of these pretensions is clearly discernible, from the history of the progress of knowledge, and from the early refinement of oriental philosophy. If Greece could once boast of her Athens, India still preserves the remains of her Benares, where the doctrines of the Egyptian school were, perhaps, understood and taught, long before they were heard from the lips of Pythagoras and Plato. In the Institutes of Menu we discover traces of enlarged policy and legislative wisdom, which would not disgrace the laws of Solon and Lycurgus; and these were promulgated at a time, when the Grecian states were hordes of wandering barbarians. It is to the East that we are indebted for the grand

outlines of those metaphysical and political theories, which, being transfused into the writings of the Grecian sages, are still perused with avidity and regarded with veneration.

But while we thus willingly concede the palm of priority to oriental science in point of time, a different estimation must be formed, concerning its present comparative importance in point of real utility. Though the learning and diligence of Europeans have been long employed in unravelling the mythology of the East; yet nothing has been found in it, which should induce us to prefer the fables of the Hindoos, to the fables of the Greeks. They have confirmed what was before known; they have illustrated what was before obscure; they have reduced, to greater certainty, what was before doubtful: but it is difficult to explain in what respect they have added to the stock of original information.

On the astronomical systems of any eastern nation still less reliance can be placed. Wherever their calculations have been applied to ascertain dates, and to the rectification of chronological errors, they have been discovered to be either false, or so interwoven with allegory, that little credit can be attached to any deductions,

which depend solely on their authority. Neither have they been found to contain any new discoveries, which can deprive the Grecian sages of their merited celebrity. The earliest observations of any accuracy, which were made in Egypt, were those taken by the Greeks of Alexandria, less than three hundred years before the Christian æra; and yet it is this nation which pretends, that during the immense period of its existence, the stars have four times changed their courses, and that the sun has twice set in the East. Even the account of the astronomical observations, which Calisthenes is reported to have transmitted to Aristotle from Babylon, has been reprobated by many eminent writers as fabulous. If the calculations of the Indian Brahmins appear more exact, yet they are not sufficiently correct to establish any certain conclusions, and still less to invalidate the authority of the only authentic history of the world. The Grecians were the first practical astronomers to whose observations we are indebted; and the science of the Egyptian, of the Chaldæan, or even of the Indian school, would have been involved in enigma and obscurity, if it had not been reflected to us by the labors of Ptolemy and Hipparchus.

Since however the Brahminical chronology ap-

pears to be more speciously fabricated than any other scheme; since the reality of some of its æras has been supported by the most elaborate arguments; and since its general authenticity has been defended with a view to weaken the foundations of the Christian faith, it will be proper to enquire what degree of credit may fairly be attached to their computations. It may be useful to distinguish between those æras, which are allowed to be formed by retrograde calculation from an assumed period, and those which are asserted to be founded on actual observation. It may be necessary to examine what arguments may be deduced, first from external, and then from internal evidence, to prove the credibility of their present system; or whether a strong presumption does not arise, that their ancient chronology has suffered a material alteration, and is of comparatively recent origin.

If the journal of Megasthenes had been preserved entire from the wreck of time, a valuable accession of information would have been supplied; to that which we already possess, on the science and literature of the ancient Brahmins. From a long residence in the centre of India, his opportunities of acquiring intelligence must have been considerable; while the history and an-

tiquities of the inhabitants were the peculiar objects of his attention. Those Grecian writers, who have written on Indian affairs, have amply availed themselves of his labors; and indeed appear to have done little more than transcribe his expressions. His diligence in collecting, and his veracity in reciting, what he learnt, are unimpeached. If he should be found in some instances to have reported contradictions and impossibilities, they are not to be imputed to the invention of fancy, nor to the suggestions of deliberate falsehood. They are fables, which he received from the Brahmins themselves, as undoubted truths; and however the serious repetition of them may be thought to take from his judgment, it still leaves him in possession of his fidelity.

From the few scattered fragments of his works, which have been preserved in the writings of other authors, it appears, not only that he is entirely silent respecting the present extravagant scheme of Brahminical chronology; but he distinctly affirms, that the Indians did not, at that time, carry back their antiquity from their reigning monarch to their original founder farther than above six thousand years before the invasion of Alexander.[1] The veracity of Megasthenes, as he

[1] Arrian. Indic. c. 9.

is thus cited by Arrian, is the more strongly confirmed, since his statement is not conveyed in terms of loose and unsupported assertion, but he specifies the exact number of sovereigns who governed India during this period. If the Hindoos had asserted the same claims to unfathomable antiquity, as they alledge at present, is it not highly probable that they would have been as eager to proclaim them, as they are at this day? Is it not probable, that among the various ancient writers who have treated on India, there would have been some intimation of a chronological scheme, which, however, it may exceed the bounds of sober belief, would have been too remarkable to be passed over in silence? While the accounts of ancient and modern writers agree in so many points, why do they differ in this?—While the portraiture of Brahminism is delineated with singular correctness by the Grecian historians, not only in its broad outlines, which might be obtained from a distant and indistinct view, but in those nice and delicate touches, which must have been the effect of intimate acquaintance, and of accurate discrimination, is it not extraordinary, that, what now constitutes so prominent a feature in the Hindoo character, should entirely disappear, or rather shonld appear in a colouring so totally different?

But here an objection may be urged, that a detached fragment, from a mutilated work, affords but a feeble support to this conclusion; and that, if the entire journal of Megasthenes were in our possession, some admission might be found which would set aside the inference attempted to be drawn from this solitary passage. To obviate this objection, and to corroborate what has now been advanced, a passage is literally transcribed from Megasthenes by Clemens of Alexandria, in which he asserts, that the Jewish and Indian nations professed to entertain the same ideas, concerning the creation of the world and the origin of things.[k]

This similarity cannot be supposed wholly to refer to the doctrine of the Védanti school, that an universal chaos formerly existed, that water was the primitive element, and the first work of Creative power, doctrines equally maintained both by Indians and by Jews. There must, at that time, have subsisted some obvious and evident correspondence between the chronological systems of these two nations, which are now widely dissimilar and contradictory, to have produced such a total agreement in their physiology. Indeed the

[k] Clem. Alex. Strom. l. 1. See also Euseb. Præp. Evang.

physiological tenets, and the extravagant calculations of the Hindoos, are inseparably blended. If this latter passage from Megasthenes be compared with that cited by Arrian; if six thousand years before the invasion of Alexander were the utmost limit to which they then attempted to trace their origin; and should this method of stating the argument be just; the conclusion which necessarily results, while it shews that the religion of the Brahmins has suffered some material corruptions, not less clearly proves the agreement of all authentic records with the narrative of the sacred historian.

Thus then the external evidence, as far as it reaches, is decidedly adverse to the astronomical system supported by the modern Hindoos; and the testimony, which has now been quoted, must be allowed to be unbiassed: it was given with no design to support any favourite opinions, and therefore cannot be liable to any well-founded suspicion.

This testimony indeed would not be conclusive, if contradicted by the internal evidence of the system, but, if that be examined, its authenticity will appear equally questionable.

Though a difficulty may occur in fixing the precise period, when the reveries of fancy and fiction were substituted by the Hindoos, in the place of historical truth; yet it is certain, on the authority of a celebrated astronomer[1], that before the ninth century their chronology was as complete, or perhaps entirely the same, as we find it at present.

The principle on which this extravagant and romantic scheme is founded, consists in a division of the age of the world, into four grand periods of astonishing duration, each decreasing from the last in a regular progression. In each of them, as the human race has degenerated in piety and virtue, so the term of human existence has been proportionably diminished by the divine decree. In each of them, the Divinity has been supposed to have manifested himself to the world, at different times, under various forms; but far from appearing according as the vices and necessities of mankind called for his interposition, his communications with man have been less frequent, since man has been immersed in misery and sin. When the present age of corruption has rolled through its circle, the age of purity will re-com-

[1] Albumazar.

mence, and thus these four periods will revolve in continual rotation, as they are supposed to have often revolved before.

On the principle of this division, it has been judiciously observed, that the disposition of these ages is too artificial and regular, to be natural or even probable; and that men do not become reprobate in geometrical progression, or at the termination of regular and distinct periods. The construction however, seems to have been formed on ideas, similar to those which dictated the four principal ages in the mythology of the western nations; and it is a striking proof of the universality of the tradition, however obscured and corrupted, that the human race was once placed in a happier state, and that an inseparable connection existed between moral depravity and physical evil.

With respect to the reality of the three first of these periods, in which the gods descended from heaven in the likeness of man, or rather when man in bodily stature and in mental attainments might aspire to the title of divine; the boldness of modern hypothesis has never attempted to substantiate their reality: but has justly assigned their invention to that warmth of imagination, and lux-

uriance of fancy, which characterise the fictions of the eastern world.

Concerning the authenticity of the fourth æra, or the commencement of the present age of degradation, and which is said to have taken place about three thousand years* before the birth of Christ, whatever difference of opinion might have formerly prevailed on the subject, there now scarcely remains a doubt, that its origin was not derived from actual observation, any more than our Julian period. All that can be deduced from it is, that the inhabitants of Hindoostan have inherited from their ancestors, tolerably perfect rules for the calculation of the motions of the sun and planets: although they have lost all knowledge of the principles on which they were founded. It is universally admitted that the Brahmins have formed, from retrograde calculation alone, another æra, decidedly fictitious, and extending to more than twenty thousand years before the beginning of this fourth age; which affords a convincing proof of the facility with which these artificial periods may be constructed, so as to describe the state of the heavens with a considerable degree of correctness.

But, even if the reality of this æra be gratuitously

* B.C. 3102.

admitted, the admission cannot, in the slightest degree, affect the truth of the Mosaical history.—This æra will exceed by very little the Samaritan, and will fall short of the Septuagint computation from the flood.

The chronological system of the Hindoos has indeed been vindicated, with singular infelicity, by those who are so forward to ridicule the evils arising from credulous superstition; as if credulity would, in any case, be more ridiculously palpable, than when, with a grave and philosophical air, it embraces computations that know no limits, and interprets literally the fictions of oriental astronomy.

But whatever opinion may be formed concerning the degree of credit due to these calculations, but which, even if admitted to the extent which the warmest advocates of Indian antiquity desire, would not affect the truth of the Mosaical history; still it has been insinuated, that there are other certain and evident proofs that the science of astronomy must have been cultivated at a period far anterior to any, which will agree with the Scriptural history of the age of the world.

It is observable, that the Indian astronomers

divide the zodiac into twelve signs, whose names, in their language, with a little variation, express the same symbols, with those which we have received from the Greeks; who in their turn borrowed them from the Egyptians. While this circumstance incontestably shews, that there has been a mutuation of science, as well as of language among the nations of antiquity; it also proves how very early the attention of mankind was directed to the contemplation of the heavens.

On what a slight foundation the presumed antiquity of these signs has been called in, to aid the cause of infidelity, it would be needless to mention. A subject of regret may naturally occur, that, in opposing these groundless assertions, we can but set conjecture against conjecture; conjecture indeed more strongly fortified by probable argument, as well as by positive facts; but, certainly not amounting to that strictness of demonstration, which is necessary to satisfy a cold scepticism, and still more to subdue an interested unbelief. But it is sufficient, if, in an enquiry, so abstruse in its nature, and so diffusive in its extent, we can arrive at probability.

Simple inspection would incline us to determine, that at whatever period, or in whatever country,

the zodiac was invented, it was at first nothing more than a rural calendar; and we might reasonably expect to discover, in its nomenclature, a description of the successive phænomena of the year, and a catalogue of the agricultural labors practised where the invention originated. It must have been the corruption of succeeding ages, which made astronomical speculations the basis of a complicated mythology, embodied the celestial luminaries, and converted the elements into divinities.

To what nation must be attributed the honor of this invention, authorities will not enable us to decide; or rather the testimony of the writers of antiquity is so equally balanced, that it is uncertain which is entitled to the preference. Pliny asserts, that the invention of astronomy was ascribed by some to the Chaldæans, and by others to the Egyptians[m]; while Cicero decidedly points to Chaldæa as the region where the science was first cultivated.[n] It is certain however, that the Greeks received their astronomical knowledge immediately from the Egyptians; and on that account, they would be inclined to favour the

[m] Plin. lib. 7.
[n] Cic. de Divin. l. 1. c. 3.

claims of that nation, to which they were themselves indebted for instruction. But one circumstance is observable, that although Herodotus[a] ascribes to their invention the division of the year into twelve months, he is silent as to the origin of the zodiacal signs.

Where then the external testimony is thus defective, recourse must be had to internal evidence.

The hypothesis, that Egypt was the country from which astronomy radiated, has been warmly contended for, by those who assert, that since their first invention, the equinoctial precessions have carried on, by seven signs, the primitive order of the zodiac; because, on that supposition, the whole appears to be an almanac suited to the climate of Egypt and to no other.

A second hypothesis, that, on the supposition of a more recent and specific date, this invention may be assigned to India, has been supported by no feeble arguments. The suggestion has been hazarded, that as India can now indisputably assert her title to the invention of the numerical

[a] Herodot. l. 2. c. 82.

figures, which had once been attributed to an Arabian origin, she will hereafter be found to have formed the first zodiac, which is generally supposed to have proceeded from Egypt. Could the point be more unequivocally ascertained, what objects the different emblems were first designed to represent, this supposition would have the highest claims to belief. The order of the signs would be found to confirm the idea, that they were formed in Hindoostan about nine hundred years before Christ.

But no facts have yet been established sufficient to overthrow the conclusion, which the authority of the Mosaical history warrants us to assume, that "the practice of observing the stars began with "the rudiments of civil society, in the country of "those, whom we call Chaldæans;" from whom it was propagated, both in Egypt, and in India; that different nations might vary their systems, in order to make them accord with their religious superstitions, or with their natural climate; and that, in those countries, where they did not agree with the natural climate, they would be veiled by allegory, and disguised under symbolical representations.

This last observation, more than any other,

will preclude an adoption of the hypothesis which infidelity has laboured to support, that Egypt was the centre from which astronomy radiated. Of all the oriental, and other ancient spheres which have been preserved, the Egyptian asterisms are the most mythological. They have deviated, far more widely than any others from those appropriate and intelligible symbols, which marked the most important periods of the rural year. Nothing can afford a stronger argument, that the sphere of the Egyptians is a secondary sphere; that finding the order of the signs did not correspond with the natural order of their seasons, they mixed their own peculiar mythology with the rural calendar of the country, from which they derived their astronomy.

The facts which have now been stated will tend to establish the following important conclusions: that the strongest presumption arises, both from the testimonies of ancient authors, as far as they can be collected, as well as from internal evidence, that the chronological system of the Brahmins has suffered a material change: and that their present scheme is of comparatively modern invention; that in earlier times, this system had some obvious and striking similarity to that of the Mosaical history; that even if the reality of the æra from

which their present age commences, and which is now generally supposed to be founded on retrograde calculation, were established, this admission could not, in any degree, affect the truth of the sacred writings; and that the only probable origin, which can be assigned to the invention of the primeval zodiac, expressly contradicts the unwarrantable assumption of an Egyptian sphere, formed at the immense distance of sixteen thousand years before the present time.

The question may now naturally be stated, what historical records the Brahmins possess, which establish the idea of their high and remote origin, and confirm those pretensions which they urge with so great confidence, and which their advocates receive with undistinguishing assent?

It is on this ground, that infidelity is always unwilling to meet us; because it is here that difficulties arise, which the most wilful blindness cannot overlook, and which the most artful sophistry finds it impossible to evade. To what cause can it be assigned, that in all the historical documents which have hitherto been brought to light, they should ascend to nearly the same point of time, and then become enveloped in obscurity, and degenerate into fable? Whence

happens it, that these fables in nations the most distant and dissimilar, however they may be disguised by difference of language, however incumbered by the adhesion of foreign circumstances, which the diversity of national character may have engrafted on them, should still retain such an evident similarity as to be clearly traced to the same source? What cause can be assigned, that the whole fabric of Pagan mythology, whether surrounded by the gaudy, but misshapen ornaments of eastern magnificence, or rising in the graceful elegance and exact symmetry of Grecian taste, or frowning terror in the ponderous and massive grandeur of northern architecture, should be raised on the same foundation, however the superstructure may be modelled or varied, by the influence of national manners? If this globe had been inhabited by nations of a separate and independent origin, could this uniformity in their traditions possibly have existed? If mankind had reached that perfection, both in science and refinement, which is pretended, would there not have occurred some distinct and diversified events, which would have clearly characterized these periods, and would have found their way to future generations?

The transactions of a barbarous tribe may be

forgotten, not only from want of splendour to attract attention, but from want of variety to impress themselves on the memory. We are informed, that the vigorous mind of our great poet sunk under the task of reciting the feuds and wars of the Saxon heptarchy, as deserving no other enumeration than the contentions of wild beasts and birds of prey. But, among civilized nations, there is a continued and connected recurrence of marked events, which force themselves on the notice of posterity.

If it should be said, that long intervals of succeeding ignorance and depression, may have obliterated every vestige of these transactions, we can reply, that such an idea is contrary to the whole course of our experience. The transactions of the age of Augustus, or of the age of Pericles, are yet vivid in the memory of the present age, though followed by the long night of Gothic barbarism and Papal superstition. At no period has intellectual light been so totally obscured, as not to shed its beams on some remote part of the world; whence, in a happier season, it has again diffused a general illumination. The great master of Lyric song, might indeed, consistently, lament, that oblivion had thrown her veil over the worthies of antiquity,

because they wanted a genius to celebrate their exploits: for who will refuse to a poet the privelege of drawing "his philosophy from his art"? But we well know that poetic fervor is kindled by the same causes, which excite adventurous curiosity and ardent heroism.

If the antiquity of India were to be determined by her own historical documents, her pretensions would indeed be slender. For almost all the information, which we at present possess, concerning her early state, we are indebted to her Grecian or Mohammedan conquerors, joined with the indefatigable researches of the modern nations of Europe. The few real occurrences, which are interspersed in the dramatic writings of the Hindoos, are so mingled with fable, that they would be unintelligible, unless compared with foreign testimony. Even the genealogy of the Kings of Cashmire, and which is the most valuable historical fragment yet discovered, records, at the beginning, but little more than the names of their sovereigns, without assigning the length of their different reigns. Whether there be a probability, that many of their genuine histories have been purposely destroyed, with a view to promote the designs of religious imposture, and rivet more firmly the chains of superstition, is a point not here to be determined.

While from a review of the subject which has now been discussed, a conclusion may justly be formed, that the exuberance of national vanity has prompted mankind to impose on themselves and others, in a degree exactly proportioned to the poverty of their historical evidence; another conclusion may also be suggested, that astronomical calculations when applied to ascertain dates, are not so infallible a criterion as many are inclined to imagine. That they have not, in some instances, successfully elucidated obscurities in ancient chronology, it is impossible to deny. They may have enabled an eminent astronomer to correct an important error with respect to the battle of Salamis, and the illustrious Newton to settle with probability the time of the Argonautic expedition. But whenever we attempt, by this torch, to explore the doubtful abyss of profane history, let us beware, lest by attracting the vapours which issue from it, this feeble light should itself expire, and involve us in palpable and impenetrable gloom.

The question proposed by the venerable sage, here recurs with singular propriety, "knowest thou the ordinances of heaven, canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth"? Is it for the finite comprehension of man to ascertain, precise-

ly, the laws by which the heavenly bodies are governed, or to say, whether that Power which at first formed them from nothing, may not alter or suspend their operations?

It is yet undecided, whether the course of the equinoctial precessions which forms the basis of these computations, proceeds with a slower motion than in former times, or whether the difference in the calculation of ancient astronomers, originated in their own defective observation.[p] It is yet undecided, since the true length of the solar year is of comparatively recent discovery, whether the difference in the calculation of past ages, resulted from their ignorance, which, if we consider the early perfection of astronomical science, is not very credible; or whether this difference should be assigned to some concussion, which our planet has suffered, and which may have occasioned a variation in its annual revolution.[q] While these difficulties remain unresolved (and is human wisdom competent satisfactorily to resolve them?) astronomy can be safely applied to ancient chronology, then only, when better criteria fail.

[p] According to the supposition of M. Le Gentil.

[q] According to the supposition of Whiston.

With still less success have these computations been applied to invalidate the only historical narrative, which, independently of the stamp of divine authority, presents a rational account of the formation of the universe, of the creation of man, and of the infant state of the world; which, in accuracy of description, not less than in sublimity of language, stands unrivalled. In vain have they been applied to invalidate that everlasting covenant, which was established before the foundations of the world were laid, before "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." In vain have they been applied to invalidate that covenant, which, as it had a retrospect to the period before creation existed, shall receive its full and glorious accomplishment when creation shall be no more; when the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall withdraw her shining, and the stars shall fall from heaven: for thus it's Almighty author has declared concerning it; "heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

DISCOURSE III.

ON THE CORRESPONDENCE OF THE BRAHMINICAL RECORDS, WITH THE MOSAICAL ACCOUNT OF THE DELUGE.

The former subject resumed—Positive proofs of the agreement of the Brahminical records, with the Mosaical History—General proofs of the Deluge in India in common with other nations—In the Three first Avatára's—The History of Cashmire—Proofs of the Deluge in India as diversified from those of other Nations—Vindication of the Puránas from the charge of Interpolation by Christians.

DISCOURSE III.

ON THE CORRESPONDENCE OF THE BRAHMINICAL RECORDS, WITH THE MOSAICAL ACCOUNT OF THE DELUGE.

GENESIS, C. 7. V. 23.

And every living creature was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man and cattle, and the creeping things and the fowl of heaven, and they were destroyed from the earth, and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.

SOME observations were offered in the preceding discourse, by which the pretensions of the Hindoo nation, to an antiquity, far beyond the limits which any records of authentic history assign to the age of the world, were shown to be groundless; and by which the sacred chronology was vindicated from those objections, which have been raised against it, from a literal interpretation of the fictitious calculations, contained in the systems of oriental astronomy. The falsehood of these pretensions has been exposed, on a

general view of the subject, by arguments familiar and intelligible to all, without entering into minute detail, or bringing forward those scientific proofs, which are too abstruse to admit of popular illustration.

To have introduced such a disquisition, may, at first, appear an unnecessary task; since weak indeed must that cause be, whose advocates designedly recur, for its support, to arguments, which from their nature must be founded on an uncertain basis. Conscious must those advocates feel of their own danger, who shelter themselves under the security which darkness affords, before they point their weapons at that fabric which they labour to subvert, and who owe their safety only to the difficulty of detection.

But since objections drawn from this source have been urged by every art of subtle insinuation, since they have been fortified by the most elaborate reasoning, and recommended by novelty of illustration as well as boldness of conjecture, an attempt to demonstrate their fallacy cannot be deemed useless or unseasonable.

Hitherto indeed those opponents of the sacred history, who have chosen their place of attack on

the hollow and treacherous ground of the Sanscrit records, have found no reason to boast of their success: since far from discovering a situation advantageous to their operations, as they fondly expected, it has proved insecure and hazardous to themselves. The partisans of infidelity, who, with all the ardour which sanguine hope and certainty of success inspire, had triumphantly anticipated that the foundations of the Mosaic and Evangelical histories would be weakened by the discovery of this unexplored mine of ancient literature, have experienced, to their mortification and regret, that it forms a part of that impenetrable rock on which the fabric of Christianity is raised, and against which, the secret attacks of unbelief, or the violent assaults of persecution, shall never prevail. The prediction, which they some years since, uttered with the most unreserved confidence, that the Christian faith could never survive another century, unless strengthened by some new proofs, a prediction founded on a principle equally false and flattering, has been entirely defeated by the event. Nor can we forbear to refer to the gracious intention of divine providence, that this additional and convincing evidence from oriental literature, should be discovered, at a period, when our religion has been assailed under every form which invention can

supply, both by grave and systematic opposition, and by the lighter weapons of sarcasm and ridicule.

From the nature of the subject which was discussed on a preceding occasion, the arguments, which were urged in support of the scriptural history, could be only negative. They could only prove, but they prove most irrefragably, that the romantic dreams of astronomical mythology can never affect the truth of a narrative, so remarkably consistent, as that of the Hebrew historian. They clearly tend to demonstrate, that we can have no other certain guide to direct our steps through the otherwise inextricable labyrinth of ancient chronology. They shew, that all the historical fragments, and all the traditional accounts of profane antiquity, in their purest state, agree with the facts which he has related; and that they do not agree, but deviate farthest from him, wherever they have been corrupted by national vanity, or obscured through length of time. They shew, that with respect to events, supposed to have taken place in Asia and Egypt, not more than two thousand years before the Christian æra, the historical page teems with doubts and contradictions; that with respect to events, which may have passed in any other part

of the world, it presents an unmeaning blank; and the indubitable conclusion resulting from this fact is, that the greatest portion of the globe was then either uninhabited, or contained only a few scattered tribes of wandering barbarians. They shew, that although before this limited period, the licentious pencil of eastern mythology has attempted to delineate imaginary scenes, shifting in infinite succession; yet that the actors in them are likewise imaginary personages, differing in all their properties from the present race of mortals, and whose exploits, for this reason, can claim no place in the history of the human species.

The object of our present enquiry will exhibit proofs in confirmation of the sacred history more direct and positive; but though more direct, yet not less unsuspicious. In the present discourse it will be shewn, that the fables, as well as the chronological computations of the Brahmins, bear a particular reference to that great convulsion of nature recorded by Moses, when the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up, when, on account of their impiety, the whole human race, except one family, was swept away from the face of the earth, and a new covenant was established be-

tween the Creator of the universe and the renovated world.

With perfect unanimity can we assent to the proposition, that in the same degree as any fact appears contrary to the ordinary course of nature, the evidence in order to induce belief must be completely adequate to its supposed improbability. But in this indisputable truth, we are enabled to find the reason why any event, which from its singularity or importance contradicts experience, and excites astonishment, is always, and will be always, more strongly corroborated than any other. The general assertion is not too bold, that no common occurrences are so clearly authenticated, as those which we call prodigies or miracles.

That if a general destruction of the world by a flood, an event so stupendous in its nature, so universal in its concern, and so interesting in its consequences had really happened at the time which is fixed by Moses, it must have excited, in the minds of those who survived, and also of their immediate descendants, a lively remembrance of its effects, is a supposition so perfectly rational, and so accordant to previous calculation, that we cannot wonder if we find some traces of it

in the mythology of every nation. That these traces should be more vivid, and more distinctly marked, in the countries situated nearest to the spot whence the renovated race of man first migrated, is a supposition equally rational and indisputable with the former. Still farther: that those traces should be longest preserved among those nations, who from their insulated situation, or their religious institutions, have enjoyed little intercourse with the rest of the world, and who, on that account, have retained many of their ancient traditions uncorrupted, is an assertion capable of the same incontestable proof. But that if the event of a general deluge be found recorded in the monuments of Indian and Egyptian antiquity, as well as in the narrative of the Jewish historian, the latter should have borrowed his materials from the former; or that the former should be more ancient, and better entitled to credit; or that the testimony of all should be disbelieved, as relating to some national and transitory destruction, is a conclusion, that can on no legitimate principle of reasoning be deduced. An event which, from the circumstances that attended it, could not but be universally known, and could not fail of producing an indelible impression, might certainly be related by different persons, at different periods of time,

and in different parts of the world, and who had no connection or communication with each other. We are expressly assured indeed, that Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians: their sciences, whatever they might be, were familiar to him: but the knowledge of a plain historical fact, unconnected with any views of national vanity, must be derived not only to Moses and the Egyptians, but to all mankind from the same source. The very variety of the fables to which this awful event has been accommodated, the diversities in the narrative, adapted to local prejudices or to theological opinions, prove that they are taken from uncommunicated fragments of some original tradition. The incident is recorded, not by constructors of philosophical theories, but by simple narrators of facts. It is also observable, that the accounts of a deluge still to be found, among the more eastern nations are as strongly marked by truth, and are equally conformable to the history of Moses, as those which are preserved in Egypt.

But although the concurrent voice of antiquity thus loudly responds to the testimony of the Hebrew historian; though the memorials of an event, so interesting to the early world, must have been treasured up with care, and recollected

with sentiments of awe and gratitude; though they have been recorded on the tablet of the skies, and shadowed out in hieroglyphic sculpture in monuments on the earth; though the combined powers of fancy and erudition have been successfully employed, in referring to this source, many of the Pagan symbols, and devotional ceremonies; yet vague and unsatisfactory would all these evidences appear, if they had not been illustrated and confirmed by that narrative, of which all other records are but faint adumbrations. If all the solitary fragments scattered throughout the voluminous mass of oriental mythology, joined with those which the nations of the west have retained, were collected and concentrated, their united testimony would be insufficient to establish the reality of this calamitous prodigy. It is not on the exact coincidence of sacred and profane history, that we attempt to prove the truth and assume the superiority of the former; but that the one is perspicuous and full, where the other is obscure and defective: the one is concise where amplification would be unnecessary, or would tend to no other purpose than the gratification of a vain curiosity: the other, by those additions which the artifice or conceit of man has interwoven, has sometimes suppressed the truth by concealment, and sometimes weakened it by expansion.

With respect to the Mosaical account of the deluge, if it had been composed to aid the designs of any interested imposture, the construction would have been more artificial; if it had been nothing more than a fabulous representation, the narrative would have been emblazoned with a richer display of imagery. While the general texture of the relation appears perfectly simple, it discovers, in some parts, a minuteness and accuracy of detail, which excite our admiration. Its consistency has been tried with the most critical exactness, its possibility has been brought to the test of geometrical calculation; and it has triumphed over the most specious hypotheses, which fanciful theorists in natural philosophy have attempted to oppose. While all ancient testimony indisputably corroborates the fact, the deductions of scientific observation, when fairly and honestly applied, are equally clear in attestation of its reality.

Of the proofs, which Indian literature has afforded in confirmation of the Mosaical account of the deluge, there are some, which it possesses only in common with the other nations of the east; but there are others which are more than commonly forcible, and peculiar to itself.

In common with other nations, the Hindoos

have retained the primary existence of a chaos, its gradual reduction into order, the original darkness, "undiscernible and undistinguishable," which involved the universe as in a profound sleep: out of which, at the command of the self-existent invisible God, issued forth light, together with the separation of the waters, which at first overspread the surface of the earth.

In common with other nations, the Hindoos attribute the creation of all visible things in six distinct periods, the successive formation of all terrestial animals, and finally of man, to one Supreme God. In common with all other nations, they have also preserved some indistinct remembrance of the antediluvian generations, and the antediluvian personages mentioned in the Jewish Scriptures.

But the first great and important event, which they attest clearly and unequivocally, is the awful catastrophe of a general destruction of the world by a flood; and therefore it is from that point, that the monuments of profane antiquity are properly called in, to confirm the truth of the sacred history.

Among the innumerable interpositions of Pro-

vidence in the affairs of men, which the Hindoos believe to have taken place for "the preservation of the just, the destruction of the wicked, and the establishment of virtue";[r] they compute ten principal descents, or incarnations, of the Divinity, during the current period of their four ages. The order in which they succeed each other is too artificial to be consistent with reality; but the three first must evidently have a reference to some stupendous convulsion of our globe from the fountains of the deep, while the fourth exhibits the miraculous punishment of pride and impiety.

Their first incarnation of the Divinity presents him assuming the body of a fish, for the purpose of recovering the sacred Véda "in the water of the ocean of destruction, placing it joyfully in the bosom of an ark fabricated by him." The following is the substance of what is recorded concerning this event in one of the Púràṇas, or sacred books of the Hindoos, which treat of creation, and the genealogy of their Gods and Heroes, and which are supposed to rank, in age and authority, next to the Védas themselves.

This Puràṇa informs us, that at the close of the

[r] Bhagavat Geeta, p. 131.

last of their grand periods of time, or as others more rationally suppose, immediately before the commencement of the present age, there was a general destruction of mankind, occasioned by the sleep of Brahmà; whence his creatures in different worlds were drowned in a vast ocean. Brahmà being inclined to slumber, desiring repose after a lapse of ages, a strong dæmon came near him, and stole the Védas which had flowed from his lips. The incarnate God Vishnû, willing to preserve a monarch, eminent for his piety, from the sea of destruction, caused by the depravity of the age, informs him by what means he was to escape, and thus addresses him:

"In seven days from the present time, O thou tamer of enemies, the three worlds shall be plunged in an ocean of death, but in the midst of the destroying waves, a large vessel sent by me for thy use, shall stand before thee. Then shalt thou take all medicinal herbs, all the variety of seeds, and accompanied by seven saints, encircled by pairs of all brute animals, thou shalt enter the spacious ark, and continue in it, secure from the flood, in one immense ocean, without light, except the radiance of thy holy companions. When the ship shall be agitated by an impetuous wind, thou shalt fasten it with a large

serpent on my horn; for I will be near thee, drawing the vessel with thee, and thy attendants; and will remain on the ocean, O thou chief of men! until a day of Brahmà shall be completely ended. Thou shalt then know my true greatness, rightly named the supreme godhead; by my favor all thy questions shall be answered, and thy mind abundantly instructed."

The event falls out as this divine personage had predicted, while the pious monarch, waiting in humility for the time, and conforming to the directions which had been given, miraculously escapes from the universal destruction.

Distinguished as the whole of this recital is, by that mixture of the puerile and sublime, which so eminently characterizes the exuberant fertility of an oriental fancy; yet we cannot fail to discover in it, evident traces of the more simple and succinct account, transmitted to us in the Mosaical history. The cause of this signal display of divine vengeance; the number of persons who were miraculously preserved from this convulsion of nature; the manner by which Omnipotence interposed to effect their deliverance, are all clearly defined, and remarkably correspond with, what we are accustomed to consider, as the words of inspired truth.

At the same time, this passage affords an evident proof, that whatever claims to antiquity the vanity of the Hindoos may have prompted them to assume: that, although the Brahmins, in their loose computation of time, have placed the the three first of these incarnations of Vishnû, at a period of immense distance: and as they are stated to have happened in their Saturnian age, or age of truth, a difference of opinion has existed respecting the event which these descents were designed to point out, whether that of an original emersion of the earth from water, or of its renovation after a flood; yet the remarkable coincidence of circumstances decidedly shews, that they cannot be referred to any other transaction than a deluge, and that, under a different form, they designate that important catastrophe.

But there are other circumstances, still more worthy of observation, which relate, not only to the certainty of the fact, but what is of still greater importance, will tend to reconcile this apparent anachronism in Indian mythology. These will shew, that the period when their last destruction of the world happened, will nearly coincide with that of the Mosaical deluge.

An objection has sometimes been urged, that

in all the historical documents which have been preserved among ancient nations, there are traditionary accounts of different destructions of this globe by water; which could not have all happened at the same time. The conclusion which has been attempted to be established on this fact is, that there are some of a date far anterior to any which are preserved in the annals of mankind. That of Deucalion is said to have occurred about fifteen centuries, and that of Ogyges about eighteen centuries, before the Christian æra. The deluges of Armenia and Egypt, the memory of which has been preserved by the Hebrews and Egyptians, though they occurred about five centuries before either, are still more recent than some, of which the remembrance is now lost; and that all of them, however memorable, must be regarded merely as local and transitory inundations.

But, in reply to this objection, it may be observed, that in the records of all the eastern nations, and particularly in those of India and China, the time of one of these inundations is fixed at a period very nearly correspondent to that, which is recorded of Noah by Moses.

Though from the best and most authentic in-

formation, derived from an accurate investigation of their chronological scheme, we have the strongest authority for asserting that the Indian æra, which forms the commencement of their present age, is founded on retrograde calculation; yet whenever it was formed, it had a particular reference to this event: for the Brahmins themselves assure us, that the beginning of the present corrupted age of the world, was immediately preceded by an universal deluge.

To this may be added, that the ancient traditional histories of Cashmire, as we find them detailed by the Secretary of Acber, affirm, that the spacious and delightful valley which is surrounded by its lofty mountains, remained for many ages submersed in water, and that a celebrated Brahmin, called Kashup, led thither a colony of Brahmins to inhabit the valley, after the waters had subsided.

This very singular fact is rendered still more worthy of regard, by the additional account which the same authority gives us, that although no Hindoo nation, but the Cashmirians, have left any regular histories in their ancient language; yet, that the civil history even of Cashmire goes no farther back than about four thousand years, when

their founder, a man remarkable for the austerity of his manners, conducted his colony thither.*

It is not meant in this place to determine the exact degree of credit, which is due to this relation in the Ayeen Akbery; though probably it was taken from a careful examination of the ancient records of the Cashmirians: it is only cited to shew, that the Indians, like every other nation, entertain a belief, and have preserved the remembrance of, an universal deluge, which began the present age; and that the present age was preceded by a happier state: but bolder than any other nation they have attempted to fix with precison the æra of this deluge. It may also be reasonably inferred, that this æra, though founded on some imaginary connection, rather than on real truth, is not widely distant from the true period, and that the Hindoos have placed their deluge, according as tradition had vaguely fixed that memorable event.

To pursue this subject farther, to point out those traces of this memorable catastrophe, which are to be discovered in many of the symbols and religious ceremonies now in use among the Hindoos,

* Ayeen Akbery, v. 2, p. 179.

to shew that the event, which is thus preserved in their sacred records, was also sculptured in their temples, and engraven on their coins, would embrace too wide a field. Though these symbols cannot be so rationally illustrated on any other supposition; and though great ingenuity and learning have been employed in referring them to their true origin; yet to insist on them would be foreign to the present purpose. Where proofs of the most indubitable nature exist, the strength of which depends on no forced interpretation, there is less occasion to scrutinize others, which leave so much room for unsupported conjecture, and in which the reveries of fancy have too frequently blinded and perverted the judgment.

From a similar reason, and because the investigation would be attended with less advantage, it is unnecessary to advert to any objections, raised from those theories in natural philosophy, which have been constructed with a professed design of demonstrating the impossibility of this fact; but which, like every other fact, must at last depend on the value and consistency of the testimonies by which it is confirmed. These theories, with whatever ingenuity they may have been formed, or however adapted to attract admiration by their novelty, have generally proved of too slight a tex-

ture, not only to stand the test of rigorous investigation, but to stand the test of time. They have frequently crumbled into nothing by their own weakness, and have been remembered no more, even before they have been supplanted by other theories, equally amusing, but equally fallacious. They have only served to demonstrate this important truth, that to point out how worlds might be or may have been formed, as well as to form worlds themselves, is the prerogative of omnipotence alone. They have served to shew, that what is above the power of man to accomplish, is equally beyond the power of man to explain. They are always in contradiction to each other, they are often at variance with themselves, but they all assert the same claim to infallibility. Though they profess to be guided by this fundamental principle, that all testimony is to be disregarded, and that it is nature alone who must be interrogated on her age; yet the oracles of nature, as delivered by her interpreters, have been found ambiguous, variable, and contradictory, while the general voice of tradition must at least be allowed to be clear, uniform, and consistent.

Among the other historical proofs concerning the catastrophe of the deluge, those which India and the Brahminical records have supplied, have

now been adduced. But in the light in which they have hitherto been considered, they can be regarded only as an accumulation of evidence, to that which was before sufficient; as an additional confirmation of that which was before incontrovertible. There are some circumstances however which render this evidence of more than common value, which essentially distinguish it from that of all other nations, and which will therefore be entitled to a separate consideration.

It is, in the first place, peculiarly valuable, as confirming a fact, which the modern Brahmins are solicitous to conceal or deny. It was also the confident assertion of infidelity, that in India no traces of the deluge could be discovered; and that a careful examination of the literature of that country, would shew that the concurrence of the traditions of profane antiquity with the Mosaical history, is not so exact, as its advocates have been led to suppose. It may, on this account, be reasonably presumed, that every proof which had a remote tendency to illustrate or confirm this event, would be studiously kept back by the Brahmins themselves; or at least that none would be unnecessarily exposed to view; that some would be entirely suppressed, and others weakened or explained away. The evidence then is entitled to

credit, as coming from those who are interested in withholding it, & therefore given with reluctance.

But the evidence is not only thus extorted from those, who must be anxious for its suppression, it is in itself undesigned; and therefore has stronger claims to belief.

If the Sanscrit records had related the event of a deluge in precisely the same terms, as those which are used by the Jewish historian; if the similarity had been so obvious as to shew that they were exact copies from each other; the coincidence would have been unimportant. If the shades of difference had been so artificially blended, as to induce a belief, that they had been purposely superadded, the better to contribute towards deception, the agreement of the other parts would not only have been unimportant, but would have led to a conclusion, precisely the reverse of the present. A natural suspicion would have been excited, that both accounts might have been fabricated from some interested motive. But, in the Hindoo mythology, this event is shadowed out in fables, which appear to have no reference to it; in ceremonies, which, although they can be satisfactorily derived from no other source, are too ambiguous and too obscure, to have been

instituted to serve any particular end. The incarnations of Vishnû could never have been engrafted on the Hindoo superstition, for the purpose of confirming the Mosaical history of the deluge.

The testimony, above every other reason, is entitled to credit, as proceeding from a people, who have preserved their faith, and the volumes which contain it, not perhaps entirely free from corruption and innovation; but who have scrupulously rejected the tenets of every other form of religion; a people, who, as far as can be determined from their history, have equally despised the doctrines of the Gospel, the Talmud, and the Koran; a people, whose literature is as singular, and as diversified from that of other nations, as their religion, or their manners.

This assertion has not however been received with unqualified assent: some circumstances have occurred, which have excited an apprehension that Sanscrit literature is not so pure and uncontaminated, as its warm admirers have attempted to insinuate. It has been alleged, that forgeries and interpolations have been practised since the christian æra, and those likewise in regard to essential points, and in order to support

particular opinions. It has been also alleged, that by the confession of the Brahmins themselves, their sacred books have suffered some material alterations; and that these will sensibly detract from the weight of their testimony.

As these additions and interpolations have been thought to affect the authenticity of the Puràna in particular; as they consequently must have an express reference to the evidence, cited in this discourse, in proof of an universal deluge; and as they involve in them a subject of considerable importance, not less than the integrity of the whole body of Indian literature; it will not be improper to close the present subject with some reflections on them; to enquire in what degree these supposed interpolations may weaken the force of any passages, which have been cited in this discourse; and also, how far as a general question, interpolations, in particular cases, affect the testimony, which profane antiquity affords, in support of the christian faith.

From some passages in the Puràna, which are thought to be of modern insertion, and especially from a similarity which has been discovered in the Bhàgavat Puràna, between the life of Crishna the Indian Apollo, and the life of Christ; a

similarity which has caused a modern infidel to draw an impious parallel between them; it has been conjectured, not without some appearance of probability, that the Apocryphal Gospels, which abounded in the first ages of the christian church, might have found their way into India; and that the Hindoos had engrafted the wildest parts of them, on the adventures of their own divinities. Any coincidence therefore which may be discovered between the Sanscrit records, and the Mosaical or Evangelical histories, is more likely to proceed from a communication through this channel, than from ancient and universal tradition.

On this opinion it may be remarked, that both the name of Crishna and the general outline of his story are long anterior to the birth of our Saviour; and this we know, not on the presumed antiquity of the Hindoo records alone. Both Arrian and Strabo assert, that the God Crishna was anciently worshipped at Methura on the river Junna, where he is worshipped at this day. But the emblems and attributes essential to this deity are also transplanted into the mythology of the west. In the Indian God, who, with a train of celestial nymphs, "dances gracefully, now quick, now slow on the sands just left by the

daughter of the sun;" we recognize that still more beautiful fiction, which ascribes natural light and poetic illumination to the same divine origin.

In the next place it should be observed, that those features of resemblance, which are said to exist between the Hindoo God and the Saviour of the world, are not so exact as some have insidiously suggested, and as others have been incautiously eager to admit. Most of the incidents in the life of Crishna more strongly remind us of the life of Cyrus than of Christ.

But it should be particularly remembered, that those passages which display a striking and verbal affinity; an affinity, which, without violence to probability we cannot suppose to be purely accidental, are not to be found in the Puranas, or in any of the authentic records of the Brahmins. The resemblance is discovered in some passages of the Apocryphal Gospel of the Infancy, which was widely circulated on the coast of Malabar, and which was originally known n Asia by the title of the Gospel of St. Thomas, and between those legends which were repeated by the Hindoos to Baldæus, and which he has recorded in his narrative.

But of this resemblance, a more satisfactory account may be given, than that which is founded on the supposed mutilation of the Brahminical records, or the incorporation of Christian heresy with Hindoo superstition. Of the Apocryphal Gospels which have descended to the present time, the principal portion originated in the east. That they were written from observation, and that they contain many events which really occurred in the life of Christ, is a supposition which has been inconsiderately adopted. They are so essentially different from the sober colouring and dignified simplicity of the genuine gospels, that they could never refer to the same character. Whoever was the author of the Gospel of the Infancy, it is certain that he was intimately acquainted with the Magian and Zoroastrian doctrines, together with those other superstitions, which have been long prevalent in the east, and particularly in Hindoostan. The presumption may be more reasonably entertained, that the marvellous adventures of the Indian Deity have been applied to the author of the Christian Religion, than that these incidents were invented, to designate the life of a personsge to whom they are entirely inapplicable, and that they were afterwards adopted by the Hindoos, to the general complexion of whose religion the origin of them is more congenial.

From this vindication of the genuineness of Hindoo literature in a particular instance, we may be enabled to repel the general insinuation, that the corroborative testimony, which the records of profane antiquity afford in favour of our Religion, is derived from passages, either of doubtful authority, or which have been proved to be interested forgeries. Wherever any discrepancy, real or apparent, subsists, between sacred and profane literature, that difference is generally interpreted to the disadvantage of the former: wherever any striking harmony is discovered, the passage is scanned with a jealous perspicacity, fearful that it might have been intruded by some bold artifice of Christian zeal.

That interpolations for the purposes of deception may have been sometimes practised, and that they may have been suggested by what is falsely called pious fraud, is a fact too evident to admit of dispute; but it may safely be asserted, that they have been probably less frequent and certainly less successful than has been industriously proclaimed. Wherever they have taken place, detection and disgrace have been almost uniformly the result.

Still less is the common opinion consistent

with truth, that periods of barbarism and mental depression are peculiarly favourable to this species of imposture; that it is the production of what is termed the darker ages. Literary forgery is the offspring of literary refinement. The incitements to this kind of deception are more powerful, when a general diffusion of knowledge contributes to their success, than at a time when even success could bring neither advantage nor applause.

But that the truth of any of the evidences of the Christian faith is implicated in these suspected passages, or that the Christian religion stands in need of their support, is an idea still more unsupported and extravagant. Never were any fabrications contrived with less wisdom, or with less relevancy to the motives which commonly influence the sinister designs of human conduct, than those which, it has been alleged, a misguided zeal has officiously and compulsively thrust into the venerable monuments of ancient learning. If all the passages in profane authors favourable to Christianity, which either the sagacity of legitimate criticism has discovered to be interpolated, or which the ungenerous vigilance of infidelity has suspected to be so, be given up, to what will they amount, or in what degree will their absence

affect the truth of our religion? They enforce no particular doctrine, they prove no essential fact.

If the eulogy of Longinus on the energetic diction and terse sublimity of the Jewish lawgiver be the insertion of fraud, will the subtraction of this encomium diminish any thing from the veracity or even from the style of the Mosaic history? If the attestation, which the same author is said to bear to the oratorical powers of Paul of Tarsus, be contained in a fragment confessedly spurious; can the impressive dialectic of the Apostle to the Gentiles; can that eloquence which struck terror into the breast of a Roman Governor lose its animated vigour, because unnoticed by the critic of Palmyra? If some of those compositions, which have descended to us under the name of the Sybilline oracles, be unworthy of credit, and branded as the awkward contrivance of some Christian in the second century; can we find no other proofs of the predominancy of the expectation of a future deliverer throughout the ancient world? If the digression which Josephus has introduced into his history, to celebrate the immaculate character of Jesus, be distrusted; will the divine mission of Christ be a subject of uncertainty, while the historian himself has unwittingly indeed, but une-

quivocally, vindicated his more than human prescience; while the pen of a Jew has circumstantially detailed in the destruction of Jerusalem, the tremendous accomplishment of the most explicit, and important prophecy that ever was uttered?

Such testimonies, and the passages which have incurred suspicion are similar to these, we can willingly resign. They are never set forward by our apologists with prominent display and pompous dilatation; they are neither exhibited as signals of defiance, nor sought as a shelter from attack. Let systems of faith, formed by human agents and for human ends be thus defended; let them secure the favourable opinion of distant ages by a careful accumulation of contemporary praise; Christianity can do more. She can derive her strongest support from the reluctant but unexceptionable admissions of her enemies, who although "they meant it not, neither did their heart think so," have been the witnesses and asserters of her truth. Porphyry shall be our commentator on the prophecies of Daniel; Julian shall attest the miraculous powers of the first Christians. We will readily accept the inappropriate epithet of mischievous superstition, with which Tacitus has vilified the Christian

faith; while he records the existence and ignominious death of its Founder. We regard not the unfeeling ridicule which the Roman satirist has thrown on the obstinacy of the primitive martyrs; while he has distinctly detailed their unexampled sufferings and their unmerited wrongs. We will cheerfully allow every partial, every malignant insinuation, which the inveterate hostility of ancient scepticism has opposed, but which even the hardihood of modern infidelity has never attempted to revive; while we claim the benefit of its admissions, which the disingenuous caution of modern infidelity in vain labours to deny. As has been shewn on the present occasion, we can prove the reality of an universal deluge, not from the Jewish oracles which relate the event in its connection with their national history; not from the phænomena of the natural world, which are in harmony with those oracles; not from the nations of Arabia and Tartary who have preserved many of the facts related in the Jewish history, but who also retain a veneration for the Jewish Law-giver; but from the arrogant and presumptuous Brahmin, who disclaims all kindred with the less favoured nations of the earth; who regards his own country as the spot on which the Divinity has displayed a peculiar manifestation of his presence, as the centre of

terrestrial creation, and the "land of virtues;" and who views with a consciousness of superior sanctity the professors of that faith, which his own records have shewn to be historically true: thus vindicating the propriety of that apostrophe, which we sometimes apply to our religion: "Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies be found liars unto thee."

DISCOURSE IV.

ON THE CORRESPONDENCE OF THE BRAHMINICAL RECORDS, WITH THE MOSAICAL ACCOUNT OF THE ORIGIN AND SETTLEMENT OF NATIONS.

Accuracy of the Mosaical Geography—The following Discourse confined to the illustration of the Origin and Settlement of those Nations more immediately connected with India—Of India or the inner Continent of Cush—Of Ethiopia or the outer Continent of Cush—Of China—Of Egypt—Defence of those Writers who have illustrated the sacred Geography.

DISCOURSE IV.

ON THE CORRESPONDENCE OF THE BRAHMINICAL RECORDS, WITH THE MOSAICAL ACCOUNT OF THE ORIGIN AND SETTLEMENT OF NATIONS.

GENESIS, C. 10. V. 32.

These are the families of the sons of Noah after their generations in their nations, and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood.

IF the truth of the Mosaical history were made to rest on any single point, and if any particular part were selected, by which its credibility might be brought to the most satisfactory test; the Chapter from which the words of the Text are quoted, would probably be adduced as the most decisive.

Of all methods, which the authors of fictitious narratives have adopted in order to render them attractive to the popular taste, there is none more unlikely to be attempted, none more difficult in the execution, and, when executed, none more unfavourable to the purpose of deception, than an excursion into the tedious and barren path of

genealogical detail. By superficial readers such a digression would be either entirely passed over, or carelessly perused, without producing any of those effects which imposture would aim at; and whenever investigation should take place, no kind of imposture would be so difficult to be sustained with consistency.

An accuracy in topographical description, or an intimate acquaintance with the manners and customs of antiquity, have often been successfully called in, to heighten the fictions of poetry and romance, by conferring on them a greater semblance of reality: but they never can be considered as just criteria of historical truth. The place of action may be described from personal observation, the correspondent decorations may be disposed with the strictest propriety, while the personages, who animate the drama, may be only phantoms of the imagination, who have never moved but on ideal ground. If for instance, we were to select the most forcible proof, that the Iliad was founded on real facts, we should be inclined to fix on the unvarnished catalogue, which its author has given, of the different nations engaged in the contest, rather than to insist on his exactness in marking out the course of the Simois and the Scamander, or his minute delineation of

the domestic labors of Andromache. Neither would the veracity of Moses be impressed with equal force, from the seemingly artificial precision with which he has specified the scite of Eden, or from the chaste and natural colouring, with which he has depicted the simplicity of patriarchal life, as from this unadorned but circumstantial enumeration of the different founders of the kingdoms of the postdiluvian world.

But if the Grecian poet has also been dignified by Strabo, with the appellation of the first and greatest of geographers, because he has recounted the names of a few petty tribes, engaged in a temporary alliance for the execution of a military enterprize; which he alone has drawn forth from obscurity, and rescued from oblivion, but which are now vanished from the earth and whose "place can no where be found;" with what sentiments of admiration must that historian be regarded, who recurs to the original founders of the most celebrated empires in the history of the world, and who at once records both the cause, and the period, of their establishment?

But this valuable remnant of ancient geography, not only affords a presumptive argument in favor of the veracity of the Jewish Lawgiver; we may

not only safely allege the improbability that a detail so particular and minute should be a fanciful invention; but we have, at this time, data, by which we are enabled to ascertain and estimate its truth. The identical names by which the historian has distinguished the different colonies, are, even now, preserved, among those tribes, whose remote situation has precluded the encroachments of military conquest, or whose warlike habits have enabled them to preserve their ancient institutions, and their original independence.—Many of them have been adopted, with little variation, by the Greeks, and inserted in their systems of geography. The labors of the etymologist, the antiquary, and the naturalist, wherever they have been fairly applied, have served more fully to illustrate the authenticity of this record. Through all the revolutions in empires, through all the innovations in religion, through all the fluctuations in language and in manners, which the world has experienced, during a period of more than four thousand years, there are even now traces sufficiently plain, to shew, that this picture, when originally pourtrayed, must have been drawn with the pencil of truth.

Among the variety of facts, which have been collected to prove that the different nations of the

earth were really descended from three distinct families, it may be difficult to select the most forcible, and to arrange them in proper order.— There can be no necessity for shewing, that an obscure account of this triple division was preserved by the ancients, among their other fables: and that this arrangement was supposed to have been made, according to the express appointment of the Deity.[t] Such a tradition would be entitled to little credit, unless supported by more probable arguments. But such arguments there are, and they have been urged with a force, which scepticism herself cannot resist. She has attempted indiscriminately to reprobate them by the epithet of fanciful, but by this evasion has contributed to establish their solidity.

To pursue the various directions, in which the three distinct races of mankind have diverged from a common centre, to subdue and people the earth, would be a task inconsistent with the design, as well as the limits of the present undertaking; but it will be the object of the present Discourse, to condense those scattered rays of light, which the Brahminical records have reflected on this interesting part of the sacred history. Such as they are, they cannot but be esteemed of singular value

[t] See Homer, Iliad. κ v. 187, and Plato in Crit.

and importance. Should the genealogical traditions of the Hindoos, and those of the Tartars, who are separated by an immense distance from India, agree with each other, and both coincide with the Jewish Lawgiver; this correspondence must give a strong sanction to the veracity of the last. This agreement will afford another decisive objection against those unfounded pretensions to antiquity, which the Indians, in common with other eastern nations, have asserted with so much confidence, and which have been defended with so much ingenuity.

The subject then of the present enquiry, will naturally be limited in extent. It will be confined to the Hindoos themselves, and to those other nations, who can be proved to have immediately descended from them, or who preserve any remarkable coincidence with them, in their mythology.

In determining concerning the probability, that any two different nations are branches of the same parent stock, 'the most incontestable proof is that which arises from any authentic and unsuspicious historical testimony. As facts are in history, what experiments are in philosophy, these must be paramount to all conjectures,'

however plausible, and to all arguments however ingenuous. But whenever historical documents either totally fail, or contradict each other, three criteria have been laid down, by which our researches may in some measure be guided; a similarity in the complexion, in the lineaments of the countenance, and in the formation of the human body; a similarity in language, that is in its general structure and in the radical parts of it; and lastly, a similarity in religious ceremonies, or in those civil institutions, which derive their origin more immediately from religious sanctions.

The first of these criteria is the least to be depended on, though most obvious to a common observer, unless it could be precisely ascertained what influence a change of climate, and a difference of aliment may produce on the human frame, in a long succession of time: the second is more satisfactory, but frequently fallacious, on account of the fanciful resemblances, and arbitrary deductions, which have been made by adventurers in the field of etymological speculation; the third and last is the most positive and certain, since the religious creed and ritual of most ancient nations inculcate doctrines, and prescribe customs, which could not have been of native growth; and these have been found to survive convulsions

in governments, improvements in manners, fluctuations in language, and influence of climate. But in the application of these criteria they must all agree in order to produce entire conviction, nor must they oppose the testimony of history.

Our considerations then will be chiefly applied to the direct proof arising from historical evidence, joined with that which may be drawn from similarity in religious ceremonies and institutions. The other incidental proofs being of less importance will consequently claim less of our attention.

In entering on the discussion of this subject, it is natural to advert to a question which has been long agitated, and defended, on either side, with equal ingenuity and learning ;—whether the ark, which had been miraculously preserved from the general destruction of the world, at length rested on the Indian Caucasus, or on Mount Ararat in Mesopotamia. The solution of this question involves another point of still greater importance:—the ascertaining of the spot, from which the general dispersion of mankind took place.

If this point were to be determined on traditional authority, we should still be unable to decide. The centre from which the different

nations of the earth diverged, not less than the situation of paradise, has been variously represented. It should not however be forgotten, that many of the ancient fathers assert with undoubted confidence, but with what pretensions to truth cannot now be ascertained, that the remains of the sacred ark were, in their days, to be discovered on the mountains of Armenia.[a]

The former supposition which assigns the mountains of Caucasus, as the spot from which the postdiluvian families migrated, has boasted of numerous advocates; and among other important reasons for the adoption of this hypothesis, the astonishing population of India, above all other countries, and its early maturity in civilization, have been forcibly insisted on. To this, the testimony of modern and ancient times certainly accords in the most decided manner. However an injudicious partiality may have induced many of its admirers to exalt Indian science, and the Indian character; yet those who have been inclined to estimate them at the lowest rate, have been obliged, reluctantly to confess, that while many vestiges remain, discovering their intimate acquaintance with metaphysics, and the more abstruse parts of geometrical science: their

[a] See Theophil. ad Autol, l. 3; and Chrysostom. de perfec. Charit. v. 6, p. 748, ed. Savil.

treatises on legislation, which provide against every possible exigence of civil government, indicate a more artificial structure of society, than is consistent with the idea of their late colonization.

But against all these arguments, however plausible, may be safely opposed the express language of our own sacred books, taken in its literal and obvious sense, from which it is never safe to depart. The civil history of mankind contained in the fragments of the earliest annalists which time has spared, are likewise in harmony with the narrative of Moses. They concur in placing the theatre of the first memorable events, that befell the human race, within the limits of Irán, understood in its true and extended signification, between the Oxus and the Euphrates, the Armenian mountains and the borders of India.

What however is still more decisive to the present purpose, and confirms the superior accuracy of the Hebrew historian, is the circumstance, that the literature of India, lately explored, records the establishment of the Brahminical religion in Irán, previously to its adoption in Hindoostan. We are informed that a mode of faith and worship, essentially different from that

of Zoroaster, was anciently professed in Persia, and continued to be secretly entertained by many eminent men, long after the general predominance of the latter.

That subtile system of metaphysical theology, which inculcates the doctrine that nothing exists absolutely but God, and that the human soul is an emanation from his essence, notions now so conspicuous in the religion of the Brahmins, have been long professed, and even now prevail in Persia, though in some measure subdued by the influence of the Zoroastrian tenet of two coeval principles. The same aversion from maritime voyages, which now prevails among the Hindoos, was also enjoined by the religion of the ancient Persians; an aversion which they carried so far, that there was not any city of note built upon their sea coasts.[v]

From the same authority we learn, that a powerful monarchy was established in Persia, long before the foundation of the Assyrian power. This monarchy was established on principles, exactly similar to those, which afterwards regulated the polity of the Brahmins. It is related that their first monarch of the present age, who

[v] Ammian. Marcel. l. 33, c. 6.

governed Irán and the whole earth, divided the people into four orders; the religious, the military, the commercial, and the servile; to which he assigned names, unquestionably the same as those, which are now applied to designate the four primary classes of the Hindoos. We are also assured that this monarch received from the Supreme Being, for the use of mankind, a book of regulations, which comprehended every language, and every science. The same account asserts, that after him, arose thirteen other prophets, who taught the same religion, and adopted the same institutions; every successive revelation corroborating the first. Now it is well known that the Brahmins believe in precisely the same number of celestial personages, one of whom promulgated a code of laws, which they hold to be of equal authority with the Védas themselves; and that the histories of Chaldea and of Persia have been engrafted on the Indian history, is a fact too well known to require additional illustration.*

From these circumstances, we are authorised to conclude, that the Brahminical faith, in its grand outlines, though not in those additions and corruptions which it may have suffered during a

* See the Dabistán, translated by Gladwin, Sec. 1.

long course of time, was the first departure from the pure and primeval religion of mankind, that it was imported, at a very early period, from Irán into India; that the tribes, who migrated thither, carried with them some scattered remains of their religion in writing, from which the Védas and the Sastra were compiled; that these books seem to have been founded on ancient symbols badly understood, and misinterpreted; and that what remains of them consists of extravagant allegory, of which little can now be decyphered.

That Irán, understood in its true and enlarged signification, was the country from which the three original and distinct races of men first separated, is rendered still more probable, from its central situation. It was from this part of the globe that the adventurous progeny of Japhet could best transport themselves to those countries, which, on account of their being separated from Judea by the sea, are emphatically styled in the writings of Moses, "the isles of the Gentiles," in contradistinction to Asia, which to Palestine was strictly continental. It was nearest to this quarter that the peaceful descendants of Shem settled themselves in Arabia, where so many of their names may now be discovered; and it was from this quarter, that the Ammonian race, so

famed for daring exploits, subdued the vast and fertile countries of India, Ethiopia, and the countries situated on the Nile; where they have left so many vestiges of their scientific excellence, and of their martial prowess.

Having thus endeavoured to ascertain, from the concurrence of historical testimony, as well as from other probable proofs, the point, from which the general dispersion of mankind took place, our researches become more confined. It is now sufficient to mark the progress of that particular family, whose history and settlement are more intimately connected with that nation, the religion of which forms the subject of our present enquiry.

It is an idea in the highest degree probable, that a partial migration of the different races of mankind might have happened, sometime before that remarkable and general dispersion occurred, in consequence of the presumptuous attempt of a particular colony to raise a fabric of immense height in defiance of the divine power.

Neither is it necessary to suppose, that the principal founders of the different colonies led them all, in person, to those regions, in which

they afterwards settled. It is on the contrary to be expected, that subordinate branches of the parent stock would retain the name of their original progenitor, and afterwards pay divine honors to his memory, though they might have been immediately led to settlement or to conquest, not by himself, but by one of his descendants.

Among the most adventurous and enterprizing of all the Ammonian race, the names of Misr, Rama, and Cush, yet remain unchanged in the East, to shew to posterity the greatness of their achievements, and the high veneration, which they must have impressed, on the minds of distant generations. It may indeed appear wonderful, that any single family should have extended itself so widely, and have formed settlements, in so many parts of the world. Their usurpations are said to have reached as far as India one way, and in the countries called Ethiopia, as far as Mauritania on the other. Differing from the roving nations of Tartary, who have been styled "the foundery of the human race," but who, with respect to science and letters, were buried in the most deplorable ignorance, the descendants of Ham have widely diffused those arts, in which they peculiarly excelled, and by which they may, at this day, be discerned. Their unrivalled

superiority in manufacture, their magnificent structures, so characteristical of their bold and ardent temper, the complexion of their religious ceremonies, are all too strongly marked to be mistaken.

In all the researches which have been made into the mythology of India, additional evidence has been adduced, to strengthen the conjecture, that either Cush himself, or one of his progeny assuming his name, led the first colony from Shinaar eastward, and peopled the country of Hindoostan, or as it is styled by themselves in their sacred geography "the Continent of Cush." The express words of their own books, the genealogies of their heroes and demigods, which rank this personage among their number, as well as their peculiarity of religion, and their eminence in scientific pursuits, would indisputably prove them to belong to the Ammonian race.

But positive and unsupported assertions of this kind would possibly pass unnoticed, and would certainly fail in producing a complete conviction, that a descendant of the Patriarch had really founded the Indian colony; if the geographical part of the Puranas of the Hindoos, had not also satisfactorily pointed out those other regions,

where different branches of the same family have fixed their residence. This has been effected with such remarkably accuracy, as not only to furnish a perspicuous commentary on an interesting part of the Mosaical writings, but also to confirm, in a striking manner, those testimonies on the subject, which are incidentally scattered in the works of several profane writers.

The similarity between the Indian race, and the Eastern Ethiopians of Africa, is a circumstance which seems to have particularly engaged the attention of the ancient poets, geographers, and Historians. When Homer conducts Neptune into Ethiopia, he places him in the centre between two nations, both black, but essentially differing from each other: and he adds, that they inhabited the two opposite extremities of the world.[y] Herodotus has marked the difference, which Homer has omitted to specify. He mentions the Eastern Ethiopia, who were considered as Indians; and that they were distinguished from those of Africa, by the straitness of their hair.[z] Arrian informs us, that the Indians differed very little from the Ethiopians of Africa, especially from those of the South, being of the

[y] Odyss, l. α v. 22.

[z] Herod, b. 7, p. 408, Ed. Franc. 1508.

same dark complexion, and that those who lived in the North more resembled the Egyptians.[a] Strabo describes them in the same manner, and very strongly insists on the likeness between the southern Indians, and the natives of Ethiopia.[b]

In the form of their government, in their scientific pursuits, and in their religious tenets, an affinity prevailed, which clearly pointed out a common origin. According to Philostratus the Gymnosophists of Ethiopia were descended from the Brahmins of India, having been expelled from that country for the murder of their king, near the Ganges.[c] It is probably for this reason that Lucian derives the science of astronomy from Ethiopia, by which we must understand him to mean from those Gymnosophists, who brought their sciences with them into Ethiopia from Hindoostan.

It cannot therefore but be deemed a valuable confirmation of the truth of this intelligence, collected from such a variety of sources, and from authors, who have written at different times with such different views, to learn, that in the

[a] Arrian, Indic.

[b] Strabo, l. 13.

[c] Philostrat. in Vit. Apoll. l. 3, c. 6, and l. 4, c. 6.

Sanscrit geography, this resemblance is accounted for in the most satisfactory manner. It appears that there are two Continents called the Continents of Cush; the one called the inner Continent, comprehending India, while Abyssinia and Ethiopia are styled the outer Continent: and the Brahmins account, plausibly enough, for its name, by asserting that some of the descendants of Cush, being obliged to leave their country migrated thither, and gave to the new settlement, the name of their ancestor.[a] This circumstance appropriately confirms the observation of Josephus, that time has in no respect effaced the memory of Cush, for among all the descendants of the Ammonian race, his name has obtained the highest veneration, while the traces of his progeny are easily and distinctly ascertained.[b]

That the Chinese belong to the same family, and were originally a colony from India, is another fact, which if it cannot be supported by that accumulation of evidence, which the former carries with it, has notwithstanding a strong probability in its favor. This nation, which has been extolled by some, as the wisest and most ingenious of the human race, while others have

[a] Asiat. Res. v. 3.
[b] Joseph. Ant. Ind. l. 1. c. 6.

author who cannot be accused of partiality in favor of the sacred writings, after a long and laborious investigation, was led to think that "the puerile and absurd stories of the Chinese fabulists contain a remnant of ancient Indian history, and a faint sketch of the first Hindoo ages."[h] From which a conclusion may fairly be drawn, that they were originally the same people; but that the Chinese have corrupted their language and their religion, by a mixture with the Tartarian blood; while the Hindoos have preserved both, by keeping their races uncontaminated.

It now remains to point out the connection between the inhabitants of India and that nation, which has disputed with them the palm of superiority in speculative science and in practical art; in those pursuits, which elevate and expand the mind, and in those institutions, which heighten and refine the enjoyments of social life.

From an accurate survey of the Brahminical religion, as we find it established in India, it is impossible not to perceive its essential identity with that of the Egyptians, and therefore that both must have emanated from a common origin.

[h] Bailly.

Both nations were distinguished by a division into various orders, of which the philosophers were the most honourable. Each tribe adhered to the profession of its family, and never invaded the department of another. The fundamental principles of their astronomical systems, would also incline us to suppose, that their sciences were derived from the same source.

To explain this fact two hypotheses have been adopted, and defended, with equal warmth. The first, that the religion and sciences of Hindoostan were transported from that country into Egypt; the second, which supports the converse of this proposition, and maintains, that the religious tenets of the Brahmins were brought into India from Egypt, at a comparatively recent period. It has been alleged that in the remotest ages to which history reaches, we find the Brahminical religion established in Egypt; but that the religion of Boodh was the predominant and primitive faith established in India, though afterwards subdued and nearly extirpated, by the preponderating influence of Brahminism.

If the first of these hypotheses cannot be fully substantiated, yet from the mass of evidence which has been adduced, we are justified in con-

cluding that the ancient Brahmins possessed a knowledge of the countries situated on the borders of the Nile, and that an intimate connection once subsisted between India and Egypt. On still less satisfactory grounds has the contrary opinion been maintained. That the Brahminical system, with its division of castes, had been completely established in India, at the time of Alexander; that it universally prevailed throughout all the countries situated between the Indus and the Ganges, are positions founded on the concurrence of historical testimony, whose force could not be resisted, even if a survey of the religious edifices in India, and of the sculpture which adorns them, did not tend to corroborate their truth.

That by the Misra of the Puràna's must be intended Egypt, is a supposition which scarcely admits a doubt, when we know that this country has so long retained, throughout the East, the name of its original founder. It is related in the geography of the Brahmins, that the country of Egypt was peopled by a mixed race, consisting of various tribes, who though living for their convenience in the same region, kept themselves distinct, and were perpetually disputing about their boundaries, or what is more probable about

their religious opinions. This account of the miscellaneous origin of the Egyptians is perfectly consistent with modern observation. According to the opinion of an eminent anatomist,[1] the Egyptians may be divided into three distinct classes; the first, that of the Ethiopians in Africa; the second, that of the Hindoos; and the last partaking of the nature of both. A mixture so general must prove the accession of Hindoos to the Egyptians, and that in considerable numbers. Even if the slender evidence which has been brought to support the contrary opinion, that a colony of Egyptians had settled themselves in Hindoostan, be admitted, yet we may safely conclude, that they visited the sages in India, as they themselves were afterwards visited by the sages of Greece "rather to acquire than to impart knowledge; nor is it likely that the self-sufficient Brahmins would have received them as their preceptors.[2]

From a comparison of these different facts, the following will appear to be the result: at the time of the general dispersion of mankind, some tribes migrated towards the East to India, while others diverged towards the West to Egypt,

[1] See a Paper by Dr. Blumenbach, in the 84th vol. of the Philosoph. Transact.
[2] Sir W. Jones on the gods of Greece, Italy, and India.

and some still remained in their original settlements in Chaldæa. Egypt therefore we might expect to find the source of knowledge for the western, and India for the eastern parts of the globe. The few general traditions, which they had received from their ancestors, it is reasonable to imagine, would find a place in the religious systems of all. These traditions would remain unaltered, chiefly in countries like India, insulated from the rest of the world by continued and almost impregnable barriers. From the unrestrained intercourse, which so long subsisted between India and Egypt, it is probable, that a communication might have taken place, on subjects of religion and science; that we have the strongest reason to conclude that large bodies of Hindoos have settled themselves in Egypt; but that there is no reason to imagine, that the Brahminical system was transported, at a recent period, from Egypt into India.

This opinion is not less reconcileable with probability, than with the express language of Scripture. Whatever the most ancient profane historians relate concerning the early civilization, and high attainments of the ancient Indians, no less than of the Egyptian nation, is confirmed by various passages of the sacred volume. The

description which is given of the wisest of men is, that "his wisdom excelled all the wisdom of the East country, and all the wisdom of Egypt."

To enter into a discussion of any farther confirmation, which the geographical records of the Brahmins, joined with the testimony of other historians, have afforded to the Mosaical account of the origin and settlement of nations, would lead into too extensive a field of argument. It might indeed be gratifying to the curious, to pursue the followers of Brahmà, to trace their religion, their language, and their sciences, through the vast range of country, which they have pervaded, in different degrees, and under various modifications. It might be particularly interesting to discover the Brahminical religion prevailing in its full vigor throughout the British isles, to penetrate the recesses of the Druidical groves, to draw their mysterious ceremonies to light, and to follow them up to the fountain, from which they were originally derived. But such a discussion would bear but a remote application to the design of these discourses, and the proofs would be less satisfactory than those which have now been offered. Though the principles on which such an enquiry should be instituted, might be sound; yet, as the arguments,

in their defence, must be collected from a variety of sources of different pretensions to credibility, they might be controverted in particular instances. If the present discourse shall afford a specimen of what may be effected with better abilities, and on a more enlarged plan, than could possibly be here adopted; and if it shall tend to shew, that although so little respect has been paid to the genealogies of the sacred history by many writers of the present day, yet that a more careful investigation would lead to a contrary judgment, its design will be completely answered.

Some observations will however be hazarded on the labors of those, who have undertaken this arduous task, which may serve to defend them from those indiscriminate and unmerited censures, by which they have been attacked.

The time of that man would indeed be misemployed, which was spent in attempting to vindicate those writers, who have devoted their talents to the elucidation of the symbols and ceremonies of Pagan mythology, from a propensity to form groundless theories, and to deduce arbitrary and unsupported conclusions; a charge which has been sometimes urged with a degree of asperity far beyond what the subject demanded,

and sometimes with sarcasm and ridicule to which no subject can be less appropriate.

But if on the one hand it may be admitted, that this condemnation has not been entirely unfounded; yet, in many instances, it has been equally unjust and ungenerous, the result of wilful perversion or of ignorance. Arguments arising from etymological analogies, from a comparison of architectural monuments, from an elucidation of hieroglyphical sculpture, as they are of a distinct and peculiar nature, so they require a peculiar turn of mind and peculiar studies to understand them: such arguments the generality of readers are little qualified to comprehend, and still less to appreciate. They certainly cannot carry with them that conviction which arises from demonstration, neither will they admit of those decorations arising from imagery and fascination of style, by which many other theories in philosophy, equally absurd, visionary, and impious, have captivated the popular taste.

If however gratuitous assumption and fanciful theory are to be thus indiscriminately and harshly condemned; the charge may be safely retorted on those who have been the most forward to

allege it. If arbitrary and unsupported assertion must be thus severely stigmatized, Bailli is far more obnoxious to censure than Bryant. If the one, amidst that rich variety of information which he has amassed, may have collected some of dubious authority: if, in attempting to unravel the origin of ancient mythology, and the primitive religion of the Ammonian race, he may have fancifully explained some hieroglyphics, and wrested some fables from their obvious signification; the other will still more justly deserve the epithet of visionary, who has ascribed the origin of eastern science and superstition to the North, who has placed the gardens of Hesperus and the groves of Elysium in the dreary regions of Scythia, and who has fixed the first spot of civilization in a country undefined by geographers, of which we know not the existence. If it be reprobated as an absurd chimera, or a ridiculous legend, even upon the authority of all historical evidence, that the whole globe was originally peopled from a particular spot, it is still more visionary to assert, in defiance of all historical evidence, that the countries of the East must have been peopled by northern tribes, merely because the southern nations have been unfit for conquest or for distant expeditions; when we know, that in the earliest periods of Asiatic history, all its invasions were

from the South; when melancholy experience has evinced, that not only the fabled conquests of Bacchus, Semiramis, and Sesostris, but the conquests of the Arabians under Mohammed, the most rapid, the most extensive, and the most calamitous, which the world ever saw, pointedly contradict the assertion.

If the facts which have been collected in this discourse, should be allowed to carry any weight, they will amply vindicate the labors of those, who have employed their ingenuity and learning in the illustration of this, and other parts of the sacred geography. Nor should it be forgotten, in a disquisition designed to promote the ends of practical piety, that whatever degree of merit may be allowed to their different conjectures, on their intentions there can exist no contrariety of opinion. No hypothesis can be lightly esteemed, which has for its object the confirmation of revealed truth; nor can the philosophy of that man ever be useless, which brings him nearer to God; which either strengthens his faith, or animates his piety. It has for its reward what is far more valuable than "the praise of men;" that reward which shall remain when "tongues shall cease and knowledge shall vanish away;" which indeed can only receive its full accom-

plishment when our present limited attainments shall be ripened into perfection, when hope shall be recompensed by enjoyment, and when our capacities shall be fitted for the comprehension of infinite truth.

DISCOURSE V.

ON THE CORRESPONDENCE OF THE BRAHMINICAL SYSTEM, WITH THE PRIMEVAL RELIGION OF MANKIND.

Preliminary cautions in judging concerning the traces of general traditions in Pagan Mythologies — What traces of primitive revelation discernable in the Brahminical system—The Unity of God—The Fall of Man—The Custom of sacrificial oblations —The oblation of a Divine Personage for the sins of mankind—Recapitulation.

DISCOURSE V.

ON THE CORRESPONDENCE OF THE BRAHMINICAL SYSTEM, WITH THE PRIMEVAL RELIGION OF MANKIND.

PSALM 147, v. 19, 20.

He sheweth his ways unto Jacob, his statutes and his ordinances unto Israel; he hath not dealt so with any nation, neither have the heathen knowledge of his laws.

IT was the object of the preceding discourse to point out the manner in which the principal nations, connected with the Indian race, separated from their parent stock; and by degrees turning aside from the worship of the true God, were at length plunged into the grossest polytheism and idolatry. The arguments, which could be adduced to prove, that any two remote and independent nations were derived from a common origin, were shewn to be reducible under three distinct classes; first, similarity in the formation of the human body; secondly, similarity in the structure of language; and lastly, that which furnishes the most incontrovertible proof,

similarity in religious opinions, and in those civil institutions which owe their existence to religious sanctions.

The design of the present discourse, is to retrace the path which has already been pursued, and to enquire, whether any impressions may yet be discovered in their corrupted mythology of a purer faith, which was coeval with the creation, revealed to man immediately by the author of his existence, and which may be properly termed the primeval religion of mankind.

What might have been the religion of man in a state of purity and perfection; what knowlege he might have possessed of the essence and attributes of the supreme Being; what might have been his obligations, and what his duties, it is equally impossible for us to comprehend with clearness, or to define with accuracy. On this subject nothing can be found to gratify curiosity, and conjecture is equally vain and unprofitable. Such an enquiry can have no reference to the present state of human nature, and is therefore wisely rendered fruitless. We are only interested in considering what revelation of the divine will was afforded to mankind, immediately after that order of providence com-

menced, which we now experience. This state is indeed variously represented, according to the temper of different individuals; and the representation will principally differ, whether it be considered as a state of final compensation, or as connected with another, and preparatory to a future state of perfection. But to the following definition few will be inclined to object: that it is a state in which there are evident marks of beneficent design, though those designs are often counteracted, and prevented from taking effect; a state in which man is endued with a desire of happiness, though complete happiness is absolutely unattainable; a state in which good and evil are never entirely separated, but frequently produced out of each other.

Whether under this condition of human nature a divine revelation were expedient or necessary; whether such a revelation would improve the present state of mankind, and might therefore be expected from a Being, who according to any reasonable conceptions must desire the happiness of his creatures; whether this revelation should have been proposed to all men alike, and when proposed should have produced irresistible conviction; these are questions, which, though capable of a rational solution, would lead us too

far from the object of our present enquiry. This will be confined to the more obvious question, whether any proofs exist, to shew that any promulgation of the divine will was originally vouchsafed.

When the passage recited in the text, and there are various other passages in the Old Testament which speak the same sense, records the intimate connection which subsisted between the Deity and his peculiar people, it is to be understood as referring chiefly to the visible display of the divine favor, which was manifested under the Jewish dispensation. It accurately describes that polity, wherein the line of duty was marked out by the finger of God, and in which the interposition of Omnipotence extended, even to temporal concerns, and obedience was enforced by temporal sanctions. It cannot be understood to imply, that the other and far greater, part of mankind had never received, from the supreme Being, any intimation of his will. The Jewish revelation itself professes to be built on the foundation of another, and prior covenant, established between the Creator and the whole human race. The declaration made to Abraham, "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," conveys some additional

information to what was before known. It cannot be reconciled with reason, if considered as an insulated passage, and unconnected with a previous and universal communication, that through the seed of a woman, salvation should be obtained and effected.

But although the Jewish dispensation was founded on a former covenant of more general concernment, yet we are not to imagine that it was nothing more than a republication of promises perverted or forgotten: nothing more than a renewal of what is called the primeval religion of mankind. The positive declaration of the Psalmist, that the dealings of God with his chosen people were essentially distinguished from those with the other nations of the earth, obliges us to draw a different conclusion. It may naturally be expected, that every new communication of the divine will, must discover some new and important relation between God and man, and must impose on the latter some additional obligations, resulting from such a discovery.

Revelation then, if we would form an accurate idea of its design, must be considered, first, as a connected scheme, which cannot be properly comprehended, unless viewed in its several parts

and dependencies; and secondly, as a progressive scheme, every successive addition to the structure being not only cemented with the preceding, but conferring an accession of strength, utility, and beauty, on the whole.

Although these observations may be too evident to admit of dispute, and have been too frequently insisted on to bear even the appearance of novelty; yet they suggest this important corollary, not sufficiently insisted on: that there is no relation of God to man revealed to the primitive race of mankind, which is not more fully revealed under the Jewish, and still farther under the Christian dispensation; but that there are many discoveries in the two last, which we shall in vain expect to find in the former.

It is the more necessary to advert to this conclusion, because the oldest, and what has been boldly termed the noblest and purest religion, that religion which prevailed throughout the world before the imaginations of men became corrupted, and they transferred to the creature the worship which is due only to the Creator, has been represented as nothing more than a refined deism. This religion is described to consist in "a firm belief that one supreme God made the

world by his power, and continually governs it by his providence; a pious fear, love, and adoration of him; a due reverence for parents and aged persons; a fraternal affection for the whole human species, and a compassionate tenderness even for the brute creation."

This definition may be true, as far as it extends, but falls short of a complete description. The oldest religion of mankind was the same in essence, though not in degree, with the Jewish and Christian dispensations which succeeded. Man at that time, standing in the same relation with respect to God as at present, had need of the same promises to animate his hopes, and the same sanctions to enforce his obedience. We are therefore authorized to conclude, that in this primitive revelation were contained the outlines, though the outlines only, of that comprehensive plan, which it was the lot of the patriarchs to behold afar off, but which it is our happiness to see in its full accomplishment.

With what degree of clearness and precision, those promises, which have received their completion under the dispensation of the Gospel, might have been revealed to the progenitors of the human race, it is no less difficult, than import-

ant, to determine. If on the one hand, their religion has been reduced by some to a pure deism, it has been exalted by others, to a more perfect knowledge of the divine economy, than perhaps was really given. The concise account which the Mosaical records have supplied, of the religion of the early world, may lead us to imagine, that the historian has only related what was absolutely necessary, and has left us to fill up the imperfect sketch which he has delineated. But whenever we attempt this task, it is requisite to guard against the suggestions of a warm imagination, and the idea that mankind, at this remote period, possessed a clearer view of the future condition of their posterity, than was vouchsafed. We may be allowed to admire the lofty genius of Milton, who from the scanty materials which the sacred history has furnished, could raise from the fertile stores of his own imagination a structure, not less admirable for the nice adjustment and exact proportion of its particular parts, than for the splendid effect of the whole. But in laying down principles, from which to deduce arguments, such a method, however ingeniously pursued, will be found treacherous and unsafe. It must be difficult, and perhaps impossible, for those who have lived under the refulgence of the "perfect day," to form an accurate judgment

of the situation of those, who saw only the early dawning of revealed light.

General and succinct however, as is the information contained in the sacred history, and dangerous as it might prove implicitly to follow the vivid, but illusive light of the imagination, there is yet another source open to us, which will sometimes supply the defect. There are still remaining, in the mythology of every nation, some general traditions which could never have been dictated by natural reason; some customs which could never have originated in any other cause, than in positive institution; which, however perverted and obscured, may be clearly traced up to a common source. By connecting these with the facts, which our own written oracles supply, we may be sometimes enabled to form arguments, which if they will not amount to the strictness of demonstration, may yet claim a very high degree of moral probability: a pertinent example may best illustrate the truth of this remark.

When immediately after the first and fatal transgression of man, a promise was given that "the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent, but that the serpent should bruise his heel;" however obscure these expressions

may be, yet we may fairly interpret them to signify, that a future deliverer should appear, assuming a double character, both suffering and triumphant: so far we may be allowed to go, but no farther. We may imagine it probable, that some additional information was given concerning this extraordinary personage; but we have no right to argue that there really was. We have no right to assume, that the promise extended so far as to predict, that this personage should be divine, or rather the divinity itself; still less that any intimation was given concerning the time of his appearance, or concerning the place where he should appear. But if it be found that the incarnation of the divinity, by his own will and pleasure, was a doctrine of universal extent, and unquestionable antiquity; if this doctrine be found generally current throughout the East, and forming a leading article of their popular creed; if it be found also diffused throughout the western world, and taught by those philosophers who had acquired a knowlege of oriental learning; if it be also discovered that this opinion was more than ordinarily predominant at the time of the appearance of Christ; if it be proved that the Jews were, at that time, in such a state of depression, as to be the contempt and derision of the nations around them;

and that if the rumour had entirely originated from them, it would have neither been entitled to any credit, nor would have been imputed to any other motive than national vanity; if above all it be found that all these distinct circumstances are transmitted to us, not by Christians, but by some who were indifferent, and by others who were hostile, to the Christian cause: if we connect all this information with the written promise contained in the history of Moses, we may fairly and reasonably infer, that the written promise was only the substance of what was more fully communicated to the early world, and which communication traditional authority has thus contributed to preserve.

But in this method of reasoning, however correct the general principle may be, there is a necessity for caution in its exercise and application. Of all authority, traditional authority is the most equivocal and least satisfactory. As information, conveyed through this channel, is always liable to corruption, by the addition of foreign circumstances, it must on that account, be difficult to trace the original truth through the mazes of error.

That all Pagan mythologies are founded on

real revelation, is a position, which though generally true, is true only to a certain extent: this assertion must be understood with several important and interesting limitations. In no instance have learning and ingenuity been more unsuccessfully directed, than in unravelling their intricacies, and especially in referring them to one cause. To explain every hieroglyphical symbol, to reconcile every physiological solecism, to reduce every poetical hyperbole, and to unravel every astronomical enigma, with the avowed design of discovering through those shadows, some important reality; even if the principle were in itself just, could never be executed in such a manner as to command a reluctant assent, and still less to enforce a rational conviction. Much of the antient Pagan creed and ritual is doubtful in its origin, much is absolutely inexplicable, and much, if it were capable of explanation, would perhaps be found to have its rise in causes trivial and absurd.

Neither will the great truths and mysteries of the Christian Revelation ever gain credit, by such an injudicious mode of defence; but on the contrary, its utility and its necessity will be less conspicuous, and may even appear problematical. Let us not, through a blind zeal, to prove that

all false religions are shadows of the true, confer on the aerial form the substance, the sinews, the vitality, and the vigor which are the property of the living original: let us not make the true religion itself nothing more than an unmeaning replicate of the false. All that we should in fairness contend for, because all that we can satisfactorily prove is, that a few prominent features of the true religion are visible through the mask of deformity, which polytheism has superinduced; with this additional circumstance, that these lines must be more clearly discernible in the countries situated nearest to the seat of primeval tradition.

This preliminary view of the subject was absolutely necessary, to enable us to enter into the discussion proposed; and will supply us with some necessary cautions, in aid of our judgment, when we attempt to delineate those proofs, still to be discovered in the Brahminical system, and which point to a higher and uncorrupted original.

The first grand doctrine of primeval revelation prevalent in all the mythologies of the Heathen world, though not generally insisted on, and seldom considered in its true light, is that which

constitutes the basis of every true religion, the doctrine of THE UNITY OF GOD.

However the forms of Paganism may be varied, yet in asserting this important truth they all agree. "From all the properties of man and nature" (is the language of an eminent writer) "from all the various branches of science, from all the deductions of human reason, the general corollary admitted by Hindoos, Tartars, and Arabs, by Persians and Chinese, is the supremacy of an all-creating and all-preserving spirit, infinitely wise, good, and powerful; but infinitely removed from the comprehension of his most exalted creatures."[1]

While the universal voice of tradition proclaims that the religion of the primitive world was something more than pure deism, the same authority attests that this religion was nothing different from the worship of the one true God; and fully rebuts the notion, that polytheism and idolatry were the oldest religion, on which the doctrine of the Unity of God was a refinement. If this had been the case, the opinion might have found its way into the systems of speculative

[1] Sir W. Jones.

philosophers, who might be supposed to entertain exalted conceptions concerning the divine nature; it might have animated the language of their poets, who in the sublimity of their conceptions, frequently rise higher than their philosophers themselves; but would never have formed a leading article of popular belief, would never unexpectedly appear in those very writings, which in other places inculcate the most degrading and licentious ideas of the divine Being, and which prescribe a mode of worship, in direct contradiction to his unity and spirituality. The doctrine of a pure and invisible Spirit is so totally abhorrent from idolatry, and yet is so frequently expressed and acknowleged in those writings, which inculcate the grossest idolatry, that it is impossible to consider this tenet as belonging to them. It is a tenet so entirely incongruous, that it must have been derived from a source foreign and extrinsical: it is like a solitary figure in a painting, which differs from the rest of the groupe, and betrays the hand of a different master.

The Brahminical records, although they often display most absurd and degrading ideas of the Deity, yet occasionally speak of him in a language truly noble and exalted. It has been

truly said, that the philosophical treatise of the Geeta was designed to reform the abuses which had been introduced into the Hindoo religion; and more particularly to inculcate the doctrine of the Unity of God: but the other, and more ancient sacred books of the Brahmins, not less strenuously enforce the same truth. Their great legislator describes him as "the sole self-existing power, he whom the mind alone can perceive, whose essence eludes the external organs, who has no visible parts, who exists from eternity, even the soul of all beings, whom no being can comprehend."[m] The description of the Deity exhibited in the Védas has been compared, and not unaptly, with the doctrines contained in the first Article of the Church of England.

Although the Brahmins have expressed the different powers of God and nature, by introducing different personifications of the Deity into their worship; although, at a subsequent period, they expressed these powers by images suited to their own licentious imaginations, yet concerning their supreme Divinity it is written: "of him who is so great there is no image."[n]

[m] Menu, c. 1, v. 6, 7.

[n] Colebrooke on the Védas, Asiat. Res. v. 8.

Though the Hindoos have represented the creating, preserving, and destroying powers of nature, by different divine personages, yet that they are to be understood in a mystical, and not in a real sense; that they denote qualities, and not persons, the following passage which has before been cited on the subject, may again be quoted as decisive.

"You are not to consider Vishnû, Brahmà, and Mahdeva, and other incorporate beings, as the Deity, although they have each of them the denomination of Deva or divine. They are all created; while the supreme Being is without beginning or end, unformed, and uncreated: worship and adore him.

"The worship which is paid to inferior Deities and to the representations of them, proceeds from this. Mankind in general are more affected by appearances than by realities: the former they comprehend, but the latter are difficult to be understood. Hence learned tutors place figures before them, that their minds may be composed and conducted, by degrees, to the essential Unity, who survives the annihilation, when the Debtas and all created existence are absorbed into his essence."*

* From a Persic Version of the Yoog Vashesti, a very ancient composition in Sanscrit, quoted by Lord Teignmouth, in his life of Sir W. Jones, v. 2. p. 284, 8vo. edit.

Quotations such as these, are indeed frequently brought forward with triumphant ostentation, for the purpose of depreciating the necessity of revelation, and of exalting the purity of Pagan philosophy. With what justice and propriety this method is pursued, will be a subject of future discussion: but when Paganism arrogates to herself the merit of inculcating the Unity and Spirituality of the Divine Essence, she assumes a claim which does not belong to her. This may be shewn from the observation already made, concerning the manner in which this tenet is inculcated, and from the little influence which it possessed on the practice of the heathen world.

Neither does it appear, that the idea of one invisible Spirit pervading and animating all nature is that, which would have been likely to be adopted by human reason unaided by the light of revelation. The propensities of mankind have constantly led them to different conclusions. Not only the proneness of the vulgar in every age and country, to relapse into polytheistic and idolatrous worship, strongly militates against this supposition; but it is still more forcibly opposed, by the refinements and speculations of philosophers themselves. If the vulgar paid their adoration to a variety of sensible objects, it was

because the philosopher first delighted to trace the Deity through the different operations of nature; and the distinction of these diversified powers, at length led to a separation of them. The observation is not without its force, that the Unity of God may be an idea, too sublime for the human mind to dwell on; and it was therefore natural to view, in its several parts, and to observe in its various effects, what, in the whole, was an object too vast for mental contemplation.

Still however it must be allowed, that as all our speculations concerning the attributes of God, must, from our limited capacities, be liable to uncertainty, the marks of primeval tradition, on this article, may not be so evident. A difficulty may occur in distinguishing between what might have been reasoned out by the intellectual faculties, and what must have been communicated by express revelation. We may imagine it improbable, that man would ever have arrived at any just conceptions of the supreme Being by his own unassisted reason; nay, we may perhaps pronounce it absolutely impossible. We can proceed, however, with more confidence to the second article; which from the nature of God, descends to the condition of man. The next proof of primitive tradition discernible in every

mythology of the ancient world, and particularly in the Brahminical system, is the FALL OF MAN.

The fall of man then, may be considered either as a barren fact in the history of the human species, coming down to us attested by the same evidence as any other fact; or as an article of religious faith, and connected with other opinions necessarily arising from it. It will be sufficient in this place to consider it in the former point of view, as a matter of fact, without entering into a discussion of the various and contradictory opinions, which have been entertained concerning its effects.

The idea that man was originally placed, by his Creator, in a state of perfect enjoyment, which he forfeited by some transgression of his own, would scarcely have suggested itself without a foundation in reality. Such an event is the most unlikely solution which human reason would have devised, to account for the origin of evil. It is probably the last conclusion which the human mind, on a survey of the actual condition of the universe would be likely to embrace. On a candid review of the general harmony which prevails throughout the order of nature, of the marks of beneficent contrivance,

of the adaptation of agents to ends, and on a comparison of the good and evil which are blended in it, we cannot forbear drawing the conclusion, that the preponderance is decidedly in favor of the former. "It is a happy world after all," we should be obliged to exclaim with an amiable Christian moralist. But even if the concession should be made, that man has a propensity to magnify, beyond its just proportion, the sum of natural and moral evil, or that there really exists a considerable sum of both; still the conclusion that either the one or the other, is a just punishment inflicted on man by his Creator, on account of some transgression committed in a former and happier state, would never have been drawn. The remark may perhaps be hazarded, without danger of contradiction, that the most probable solution which the human mind, unaided by the light of revelation, would adopt, if not at once enveloped in the gloom of atheism, would be that which has prevailed so widely throughout the eastern world, the Manichean doctrine, of two opposite principles of equal force, and alternately controlling the affairs of the world.

But yet we find, that the most common method of accounting for the origin of evil is the dege-

neracy of man from a state of purity to a state of corruption: a doctrine which has retained a place in the popular creed of every nation. Of Brahminism it may be almost said to form the basis. It is this idea, which has regulated its elaborate scheme of chronology; it is this idea, which causes its followers to submit to the most excruciating penances, in order to purge the soul from the stains which she has contracted, during her abode in this polluted body. They have indeed corrupted and obscured this doctrine; they have engrafted on it additions which do not properly belong to it; they have carried it so far, as to inspire them with a hatred of life, and a dereliction of every worldly enjoyment; they have continually placed before their eyes the accomplishment of that melancholy period, when a total decay of bodily strength, as well as an entire degeneracy of morals shall increase the sum of present misery; but these deviations from the truth could never have happened, unless they had truth itself for a foundation. These are phantoms of the imagination, which would never have existed, if they had not been derived from some correspondent reality.

From the fall of man we are naturally led to the consideration of a positive ordinance, im-

mediately connected with it, and springing out of it; THE CUSTOM OF SACRIFICIAL OBLATIONS AS AN EXPIATION FOR SIN.

In whatever point of view this custom may be regarded, whether as eucharistical or propitiatory, whether originating in the idea that it was a proper mode of expressing sentiments of gratitude to the Deity, for the enjoyment of the bounties of nature, or as a proper atonement for guilt; still a rite so peculiar and so universal, must have received its sanction from some positive command, and could never have been the dictate of natural reason.

The oblation either of the fruits of the ground, or of the choicest produce of the flock, could never be supposed any proper method of demonstrating gratitude, or appeasing the wrath of the supreme Being. "Thinkest thou that I will eat bull's flesh, or drink the blood of goats," is a question, which would have suggested itself, though it had not proceeded from the mouth of God. "Shall I offer the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul," is a sentiment of natural reason, which, with reverence be it mentioned, seems not to require the stamp of divine authority.

An opinion has indeed been maintained with some plausibility, that animal sacrifices might have derived their origin from the hieroglyphical language of former times; and that it was customary to typify vices, by animals, whose propensities were analogous to them. To the ignorant and uninformed multitude, such an hieroglyphic would seem to prescribe the actual sacrifice of the animal. But in what respect does this analogy hold good? Is there any correspondence, in hieroglyphical language, between the qualities of those domestic animals which supplied man with sustenance, and those depraved appetites which were supposed to be thus offered up to the Deity? Was the tender lamb, which is well known to have been the favourite victim, not only under the Jewish theocracy, but throughout the heathen world, an apposite emblem of pride, of lust, of revenge, or of any of those vices which debase the human heart? Can the period be pointed out when sacrificial victims were selected, with any reference to the qualities which they represented in hieroglyphical language? In short this rite, as we find it practised under every form of ancient religion, cannot be reconciled with the idea of a spiritual God, unless it had been sanctioned by his express injunction.

That this custom does not, at present, find a very prominent place in the religion of Hindoostan, was at first thought an anomaly in the history of Pagan mythology, difficult to be explained, and which strongly opposed the supposition of its divine and positive institution. But in the earlier periods of the Indian history, it is certain that both bestial, and also human, sacrifices were practised. Although the predominant influence of the doctrines of Buddha in Hindoostan, has greatly contributed to repress these sanguinary rites, and although the general mildness of the Hindoo character has induced some writers, to deny that they ever existed; yet their vestiges are still visible, though they have never been re-established in their pristine vigor with the reviving authority of the Brahminical system. The Védas themselves, on some occasions, enjoin the oblation of men, as well as animals, and that the sacrifices of the latter were anciently practised, we have the authority of Strabo and Arrian."[p] It is also well known that one of the incarnations of Vishnû, that of Buddha himself, is described by the Brahmins, as having taken place for the purpose of abolishing the sacrifices enjoined in the Védas; and whatever difference

[p] Strabo, lib. 15. Arrian in Indicis.

of opinion may be entertained concerning the time, or the genuineness of this descent, it is a decided proof, that the custom of sacrificial offering must have been universally prevalent.

The universal practice of sacrificial oblations will at length conduct us to that memorable event, which they were designed to prefigure; THE OBLATION OF A DIVINE PERSONAGE FOR THE SINS OF MANKIND.

And here, if the subject be of more than common importance, the tradition is more than ordinarily explicit. In other instances, traditionary evidence glimmers with a faint, a partial, a doubtful light, but here it bursts forth in full and transcendant splendor. Whither can we turn our eyes on the religion and philosophy of the ancient world, without discovering an ardent expectation of a future deliverer, who should, by his sufferings and example, expiate sin and render virtue more lovely? It is not the declamatory language of national vanity; it is not the hyperbolical rhapsody of poetic fervor; it is but the sober narrative of unornamented truth, when the Psalmist thus speaks of him in a prophetic spirit: "They that dwell in the wilderness shall kneel before him, his enemies shall lick the dust;

the kings of Tharsis and of the isles shall bring presents, the kings of Arabia and Saba shall bring gifts; all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall do him homage." If we turn our eyes to the Persian legislator, we shall find him predicting the appearance of a personage, who should establish a religion pure and immutable; that kings should be obedient to him; that, under his empire, peace should prevail and discord cease. If we turn to Confucius, we shall hear him attesting the same event, and proclaiming that "in the West the Holy one should arise." If at length we approach the followers of Brahmà, the sages of the Védanti school, we shall find them putting into the mouth of their incarnate God, of that divinity, whom they consider as invested with the fullness of celestial glory, this remarkable declaration, "I am the sacrifice, I am the victim." If we advance in our researches, to the Gothic mythology, we there find their middle divinity represented as obtaining a victory over death and sin; but at the expence of his own life. Shall we pursue this notion from the East to the West, from the sages of Hindoostan to the sages of Greece? We shall find Plato, imbued with all the learning of the East, and with all the learning of Egypt, describing his righteous man, who

should end a life of unrivalled goodness, by a death of unexampled ignominy. Shall we finally attempt to discover this idea in the religion of Pagan Rome? There also it appears. While it lurks in the magnificent but mysterious imagery of Virgil, it meets us openly in the full and unreserved confession of Tacitus.

Thus then, those grand truths on which the Christian scheme is founded, may, all of them, be traced up to the source of primeval tradition; they form the substance of what is termed the primitive religion of mankind. The important doctrine of the existence of an invisible and spiritual God, in opposition to the practice of polytheism and idolatry; the fall of man; the custom of sacrificial oblations as an atonement for sin; and these intended to prefigure the great sacrifice of the divinity by his own will and pleasure, for the offences of the world: all these may be clearly discerned among the general corruptions of Paganism, and particularly in the religious system of Hindoostan. And these are sufficient. Other instances of correspondence might be adduced which decidedly point to some original and universal communication, and which might be satisfactorily proved, without infringing on any of those important opinions, by

which the coincidence of traditional evidence ought to be determined; but these are selected, as being the most unequivocal, and as comprehending subjects of infinite importance.

These observations will close the view of the Brahminical religion, with respect to the confirmation which it has afforded to the truth of the Mosaical history; and this confirmation cannot but be deemed highly important, when we recapitulate the different arguments in their connection and dependency.

We here behold a system of religion, subsisting at the present time, in the same form, by which it has been known since the earliest period of authentic history. We have taken a review of its doctrines from a comparison of foreign testimony with its own sacred records; and these have afforded mutual illustration; and the one proves the veracity of the other. We have seen the regular government, which was established under this religion, long since overthrown; we have seen its hierarchy partaking in the same destruction; but even in this disjointed state, retaining those inherent seeds of vitality, which have preserved its dominion over a vast and refined population. We have, in the first place,

shewn on what a baseless foundation those claims to unfathomable antiquity, which its professors assume, must at length rest; that there is the strongest reason to suppose that their chronological scheme, in its pure state, was not widely different from the moderate computation, which the Mosaic writings give, concerning the age of the world; that before this limited period we see nothing but cycles of artificial construction, and an immense space of unoccupied vacuity. We have seen that the first event, which its records clearly and unequivocally attest, is the renovation of the present world from destruction by a flood, and that the modern Hindoos, however solicitous to conceal or deny the fact, can never rationally explain many of their fables, but by an allusion to this catastrophe. In the sequel of our researches a striking coincidence has been discovered, between the geography of the Puránas, and the Mosaical account of the origin and settlement of nations, branching from three different stocks: and the geography of the Puránas, however disfigured by wild allegory, is in many instances, strikingly confirmed by the Grecian historians and geographers. In the last place we have attempted to shew, that man was never left by his Creator, without some revelation to direct his steps; and what

that revelation was, what promises it unfolded, and what doctrines it was designed to inculcate, may be collected from the concise information, contained in the history of Moses, compared with those traditions, which are yet to be discovered, in all the mythologies of the ancient world.

The remaining part of the proposed design will be directed to a different object. We have itherto regarded this system of ancient superstition, venerable in its ruins, with respect to its origin; it is now to be viewed in its effects on the character. We are now to examine that theory of morals, which has been celebrated as bearing evident marks of divine inspiration; which has been said to contain every precept, which can preserve the virtue and advance the happiness of man: which some have praised from a transient and superficial view, and which others have admired from the fastidious taste of a depraved appetite. Nor can this latter circumstance excite surprize. For as to an understanding relaxed by indolence, or vitiated by improper studies, the false ornaments of style will dazzle, where genuine eloquence will be disregarded; a splendid and specious paradox will confound, where the native force of truth will fail to con-

vince; so there is a sickly morality, the hectic of an inflamed imagination, which consumes, not the genial warmth of true benevolence which invigorates the mental energies; a morality, which contributes to form the suspicious character of a grave sentimentalist, and not that of a rational philosopher; a morality, which is totally incompatible with the necessary duties of human life considered as a state of discipline, and as a preparation for a state of eternal happiness and perfection.

DISCOURSE VI.

ON THE BRAHMINICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE DEITY OPERATING AS A PRESERVATIVE OF MORAL PURITY, AND AS A SOURCE OF HAPPINESS.

Contradiction in the Hindoo character explained—Of the mystic Worship of the Hindoos and their licentious Rites—Of the Doctrine of the immortality of the Soul, how converted into a source of misery—Of the effects of a System of Metaphysics operating on the Superstition of the Vulgar—Of the Influence of Climate on national Character.

DISCOURSE VI.

ON THE BRAHMINICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE DEITY OPERATING AS A PRESERVATIVE OF MORAL PURITY, AND AS A SOURCE OF HAPPINESS.

EXODUS 34, v. 5, 6.

And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.

AN eminent[q] writer has observed, that the indistinctness, produced by the association of abstract ideas, is often a source of the true sublime. The remark is in no case so well illustrated, as in those representations of the Deity, with which the Holy Scriptures abound: representations, which while they exclude form and body, affect the soul with the most awful sense of infinite power, majesty, and glory, manifested

[q] Edmund Burke.

in infinite mercy and goodness. The mind of man, utterly incapable of comprehending the object, shrinks back within itself, at the contemplation of the "high and holy one who inhabiteth eternity," and humbles itself, in unutterable aspirations, before the Lord God Almighty. If he who "was caught up into the third Heaven," knew not, even when the rapture was past, whether he had been "in the body or out of the body: if he was unable to utter the things which he had seen and heard: if the positive, the experimental knowledge of "the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," could be represented by an inspired Apostle, only in negative and indistinct terms; well may we be assured of the insufficiency of language to describe HIM who is the author of them all: and of whom the human imagination can conceive nothing more than the shadows of his perfections; the out-skirts of his glory. That man, unassisted by revelation, is capable of forming any notions worthy of the Almighty, may safely be denied; because most certain it is, that all the proper notions which any people on earth ever did form concerning him, may be traced to their sources, either in primeval tradition, or in the written theology of Moses.

But insufficient as man must ever be to speak or to think of the eternal Majesty, "with the honour due unto his name," still man is capable of knowing Him, so far as he has condescended to reveal himself; because the terms of such revelation must of necessity comport at once with the Divine nature, and with the capacity of the creature to whom the revelation is made. When the God of the universe no longer hideth himself in thick darkness, he allows us to recognize him as the God of man, as the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. Again—whatever peculiar attributes such revelation should display as inherent in the divine essence, those attributes must be analogous to the ideas of them, with which man is conversant. The archetypal wisdom, and power, and goodness, and patience, cannot be different in nature, though infinitely different in degree, from the same qualities in a created being; because a real difference in their nature, would not only render a revelation of the divine nature totally incomprehensible as a truth; but every deduction from its principles would defeat all propriety and justness of religious sentiment, and all order in religious obedience. Whensoever therefore the Divine Being should have imparted to his rational

creatures the knowledge of himself, that knowledge must be at once proportioned to their intellectual capacity, and to the purposes for which the knowledge is imparted. But the intellectual powers of man, however capable of pursuits and attainments, transcendently higher than his present state of existence demands, are, with respect to "the things of God," merely dormant faculties, till awakened into action by a divine call, and directed by a divine rule; and the duties prescribed by that rule, must be consonant to the nature and to the authority of Him who gives it. But the spiritual nature, and the inherent dominion of the Lord God, must of necessity, to be intelligible by man, be adumbrated by representations to which man's faculties are equal, because it is impossible for man to understand them as they really are; and the religious duties towards Him who is without parts or passions, must be conformable to the intellectual powers of the creature who is to fulfil them; and in terms, of which, so far as they go, his conceptions are clear and just, however inadequate to the essential dignity of the LORD OF ALL.

Most of those terms, by which the Holy Scriptures represent the attributes of the Supreme

Being, are, in a strict sense, inapplicable to HIM: they are derived from qualities and relations applicable to MAN alone, for whom language was intended, & whose wants it was designed to express. But yet those notions which are philosophically erroneous, may be rendered practically useful.

Though in condescension to the weakness, and in conformity to the capacity of man, the Almighty is sometimes described as affected by human passions and subject to human infirmities; yet these representations carry with them no practical error. They are such as no blindness can misunderstand, and no base passion misinterpret. On the contrary they are such as are adapted to produce the happiest influence on the conduct. Whenever occasions present themselves, when a more appropriate idea of the Divinity is essentially connected with the revelation of any important truth, or with the injunction of any particular precept, he always appears in a manner calculated to impress sentiments of the purest veneration: he is then divested of every passion which belongs to humanity, and is exhibited in awful, but indistinct grandeur.

And if under the Jewish law, where the conditions of obedience were more strict, the

penalties of involuntary error or of wilful rebellion were proportionably severe: yet, even then, Almighty Power is tempered by mercy; though the formalities with which the law was introduced, were designed to impress terror, yet the precept itself was only love. The Governor of the universe is, indeed, represented, as punishing a violation of his commands on distant generations; but when he promulgates that code of moral duty of which rigorous justice is the characteristic, he describes himself as "gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." The same design was preserved throughout the old covenant, which is still more conspicuously displayed under the Christian dispensation, that of placing the Divine Being in such a point of view, as, while it may operate on the one hand in the most forcible manner, as a preservative of moral purity, may, on the other hand, afford to man a source of rational happiness.

In the general delineation of the Brahminical system, in its influence on the moral character, the first place was assigned to the ideas which it inculcates concerning the Divine nature; but, before a particular discussion is attempted of their practical effects, it wilt be proper to state the irresistible influence, which these ideas must have,

on the general complexion of every religion, and consequently on the formation of the character.

It has been frequently stated, that, although the religion of the Hindoos, on a superficial view, appears to consist in the most extravagant polytheism; yet that it is, in fact, the worship of the one true God. According to their own explanation, they have, "in their temples, many statues, "both of superior and inferior divinities, before "which they prostrate themselves, and present "them with offerings; nevertheless they do not be-"lieve that the statues are the divinities them-"selves, but only their image or representation; "and that they honour them only on account of "the beings which they represent; that they are "placed in the temples only to furnish the "people with some visible object of attention; "and that when they pray, it is not to the "statue, but to him whom it represents."*

This indeed has been the apology for idolatrous worship in every age; but on this very account, we assume the superiority of the Jewish and of the Christian revelation, over the dreams of Pagan superstition. In each we are occasionally

* Sketches of the Hindoos.

affected by sublime descriptions of the invisibility of the Supreme Being; in each the Supreme Being is brought nearer to the human comprehension, by being invested with the relations and qualities of human nature. But, it is perhaps necessary that he should most frequently appear in this latter point of view; because this view will have the most powerful influence on the character and conduct of man. We can readily admire the magnificent description of the Pagan Jupiter, causing the universe to tremble at his nod; but this description could have little influence on the mind of his worshippers: to whom he more frequently appeared wallowing in the impunities of sensuality and lust?

Whenever we peruse the history of the various superstitions which have prevailed in the world, we find, that they have derived their origin from the sentiments and opinions, which were at that time, generally popular. On this account, by observing the complexion of ancient mythologies, by an acquaintance with the attributes and adventures of their deified heroes, by marking those particular passions, which were thought worthy to animate those celebrated personages, whether those of ambition, cruelty or lust, we can, with some degree of certainty,

determine concerning the state of society and manners, at the period in which they took their rise. We may easily judge of the moral condition of the world, at the time which rendered the labors of Hercules meritorious and even necessary, and of the turbulent anarchy, which suggested the fiction of the various and successive incarnations of Vishnû.

But if ancient mythology derived its origin from the prevailing state of society and manners, in process of time the state of society and manners was determined by the prevailing mythology. And as the character must be influenced by the complexion of religion, so the genius of every religion is determined by the light, in which its peculiar Divinity appears. The total exclusion of a superintending providence from the affairs of men, will either generate indifference, and indisposition to mental exertion, or an intemperate love of sensual gratifications. On the other hand, the predetermination of the minutest events by an irresistible decree, will necessarily give rise to abject fear and gloomy apprehensions of inevitable woe. Nay it has been insidiously asserted, with no friendly reference to the Christian religion in particular, that a belief in the Unity and Spirituality of the

Divine nature, brings with it a practical consequence not generally regarded. It engenders a spirit of inflexibility towards the errors and prejudices of others, which is rarely to be found among the followers of polytheism.[1]

This however is certain, that in the same proportion as the cloud which veils the divine splendor, appears to the human vision in lighter or deeper shades, in the same degree will the human intellect be enlightened or obscured, and the human passions will be elevated by confidence and hope, or depressed by doubt and despondency. "The pillar of fire", which is beautifully represented in the sacred history, as proving "a cloud and darkness" to the Egyptians, while it afforded a light to "the camp of Israel," is an illustrative symbol of the practical and efficient difference between the worship of Jehovah, and of the Gods of the Heathen.

In contemplating the moral character of the Hindoos, as taking its complexion from their religion, we observe, that as their superstitious ritual presents a strange mixture of images sanguinary and voluptuous, an intimate union between obscene mirth and austere devotion; so

[1] Hume.

the manners of its followers have been actuated by contending and contradictory principles; a circumstance which has excited much wonder, and given birth to much erroneous and unprofitable speculation. While, on the one hand, the native of Hindostan, has been represented, as shuddering at the sight of human blood: as carrying this terror to the most troublesome excess: to an excess, which prevents him from destroying the most noxious animals, or of partaking of such as were designed for the use of man; and while he has been represented as sunk in the most degrading inactivity; on the other hand the same character is distinguished by such acts of deliberate cruelty, of undaunted resolution, and of painful and continued exertion, as sometimes astonish, and sometimes disgust; such acts as surpass all credibility, and even exceed description.

This union so unnatural and discordant, can never be distinctly explained nor understood, but by tracing the steps which led to its formation; by shewing in what manner the different kinds of superstition have been so blended with each other, as, at length, to compose one confused whole.

When the hieroglyphics, which we may sup-

pose at first innocently intended to represent the attributes of the Deity, ceased to be considered as mere symbols, and were converted into distinct personages; then mankind divided themselves into particular sects, attaching themselves, each to the exclusive worship of the idol of his choice. The same spirit which led them to personify the powers of nature, led them to distinguish between the efficacy of those powers. The sect of Brahmà, who worshipped the creative power or supreme Lord, at first claimed a pre-eminence for the object of their adoration. The sects of Vishnû and Síva, who worshipped the preserving and destroying powers of the Deity, combined against the followers of Brahmà, and obtained so decided a victory over them, as totally to abolish their worship. Each of these two last, afterwards, contested the superiority with the other.

The sect of Vishnû, which worshipped the preserving power of the Deity, had been always addicted to the celebration of obscene rites. It had indeed been united with that of Síva in the league against the sect of Brahmá, and that union appears to have continued till the time, when the conversion of an emblem of an abstract idea into an object of worship, introduced a revolution in

religion, which had a sensible and extended influence on the manners of mankind.

It was then that a species of superstition arose, which rapidly spread its deadly influence; a superstition, which degraded the Deity into an implacable tyrant; which prescribed the most dreadful penances, and filled the minds of its votaries with the most excruciating terrors. If the former superstition were calculated to vitiate and corrupt the mind, the latter was not less adapted to enslave it. The sect of Síva, having at length totally separated itself from that of Vishnû, introduced those cruel practices and sanguinary rites, which, in after times, were extended over so large a portion of the world. These rites were acknowledged, and practised by remote nations, who were ignorant of both their origin and significancy; and to this cause may be attributed that mixture of images, gloomy and gay, cruel and lascivious, which characterised the religious fictions of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Their ignorance of the symbols which they had borrowed, caused them to supply their want of information by fables congenial to their national temper, and gave rise to a mass of irreconcileable contrarieties.

By the conjunction of these two opposite kinds of worship, the Hindoo character has been always actuated; and still retains the marks of these different impressions. But as this account comprises only a general view, it will be necessary to take a more intimate survey; and to specify those particular articles of their religious faith, which debase the moral character of the Hindoos; classing them under the two general divisions, already laid down, as they operate in preserving the purity, or in promoting the happiness of man.

In attempting to unfold the practical effects of the mythology of the Hindoos, and to estimate the purity of their moral code, it is of little importance to advert to those particular passages in their sacred writings, represent the Deity in those colours, in which he always appears to a mind divested of guilt and prejudice, and unclouded by superstition. To what source these sentiments should be attributed has been intimated in another place. Such passages may justly claim the admiration of those, whom a purer faith has taught, duly to appreciate their value, and forcibly to feel their beauty. Who for instance can refuse the merited praise of sublimity, to the following simple, but energetic, invocation of the divine Being?

"Let us adore the supremacy of that divine sun, the god-head, who illuminates all, who recreates all, from whom all proceed, to whom all must return, whom we invoke to direct our understanding aright, in the progress towards his holy seat."[t]

Again, what sentiments can be more exalted, and more worthy of the divine nature, than the following?

"As God is immaterial, he is above all conception; as he is invisible, he can have no form; but from what we may behold of his works, we may conclude that he is eternal, omnipotent, and present every where."[u]

From such passages an undeniable conclusion must be formed, that, although the religion of the Hindoos, in its practical tendency, leads to the most extravagant polytheism; yet it was originally the worship of the one true God; since it teaches, that there is one great and supreme Being, who is distinguished by the title of BRAHME, OF THE GREAT ONE, and that from him even the inferior deities themselves have proceeded.

[t] Gayatri or holiest verse of the Védas.

[u] Geeta.

But it will now be seen, in what manner the conceit of man has been employed, in converting this noble doctrine into a prolific source of error.

The reverence paid to this God of Gods, is not that veneration which is a regulating principle of action, which is effectually calculated to produce purity of heart, and rectitude of conduct; but that mysterious reverence, which springs from superstitious fear, and which has always proved the destruction of the moral principle.

The worship paid to him is said to be purely spiritual, consisting chiefly in devout meditation. The following is considered as the wish of genuine piety.

"May that soul of mine, which mounts aloft in my waking hours, as an ethereal spark, and which, even in my slumber, has a like ascent, soaring to a great distance as an emanation from the light of lights, be united, by devout meditation, with the spirit supremely blest, and supremely intelligent."[1]

But this worship, although chiefly consisting

[1] Extract from the Védas.

in abstracted devotion, is sometimes expressed by the suppressed utterance of the mystic word OM; a word never to be used by the devout Hindoo, without a particular preparation.

The solemnities, which ought to precede the utterance of this word, are carefully prescribed by their divine legislator. "If he have sitten on culms of sacred grass with their points towards the East, and be purified by rubbing that holy grass in both his hands, and be farther prepared by three suppressions of breath, equal in time to five short vowels, he may then fitly pronounce OM."*

It is not intended, in this place, to shew what resemblance these previous solemnities may bear to the occult worship of the Egyptians, or to the cabbalistic mysteries of the Jews; but the quotation is made to shew that this practice, once so general throughout the world, of covering religious doctrines under the veil of mysterious secresy, has always proved the bane of moral virtue; and has ever been applied to vicious and interested purposes. In every religion mysteries must exist, or rather there are moral difficul-

* Menu, c. 2, v. 75.

ties, inseparable from the present constitution of the world, which religion cannot remove. But when the peculiar doctrines of any revelation, are jealously guarded by a favoured few, from the unhallowed touch of the vulgar, they become a source of absurdity and error. They are then converted into engines of tyranny, or into instruments of licentious pleasure. In process of time they become obnoxious to the just condemnation, which the Apostle has bestowed on the rites of the Heathen world; "it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret." Mysticism in science has always proved an infallible method of perpetuating the reign of ignorance: mysticism in religion has proved a method, not less effectual, of fostering the seeds of immorality. They have always disappeared, and disappeared together, wherever the light of true learning and genuine piety have dispelled the mists of error and of barbarism.

An awful veneration for the majesty of heaven, is not better preserved, by thus shrouding it in obscurity, concealing it from common observation, and removing it to so great a distance, from the hopes and fears of man. By true devotion it is always regarded without servile dread. No preparatory rites, no preliminary of

initiation is requisite, to raise the devout spirit to God; no time, no place can exclude it from communion with him.

Accordingly, by thus removing the Supreme Being so far beyond the reach of ordinary contemplation, He is among the Hindoos seldom the object of any religious honor, and still less of religious adoration. He is now considered as an obsolete Deity, who has no interference in the affairs of the world.

From this statement, it will appear, that the doctrine of the Unity and Spirituality of the Divine Being, has but little influence on the moral conduct of the Hindoos; nor indeed is this contended for, even by their warmest apologists.

But it remains to point out the practical effects of their polytheistic worship, on which the opinions of mankind have been widely at variance.

Experience has amply proved, not only that the bias of human nature, has uniformly tended to polytheism and idolatry, during times of ignorance; but also, that in an age of learning and refinement, the same bias has had the same tendency: since the writings of the most distinguished philoso-

phers in modern times, alike eminent for delicacy of taste, and strength of reasoning, have displayed an unequivocal partiality in their favor. They have found apologists in the piety and erudition of Bacon[x], as well as in the metaphysical acuteness of Hobbes[y] and the cold scepticism of Hume. The latter has thus declared his opinion concerning their practical influence.

"Where the Deity is represented as infinitely superior to mankind, this belief, though altogether just, is apt, when joined with superstitious terrors, to sink the human mind into the lowest submission and abasement; and to represent the monkish virtues of mortification, penance, humility, and passive suffering, as the only qualities which are acceptable to him. But where the Gods are supposed to be only a little superior to mankind, and to have been advanced, many of them, from an inferior rank, we are more at our ease in our addresses to them; and may, even without profaneness, aspire sometimes to a rivalship and emulation of them. Hence activity, spirit, courage, magnanimity, love of liberty, and all the virtues which aggrandize a people."[z]

[x] Advancement of Learning, b. 1. c. 7.

[y] Leviathan, c. 45.

[z] Hume, Natural Hist. of Religion, sect. 10.

Without discussing the general accuracy of this statement; without contending that the qualities, which the world has thought proper to deify, have been rarely such as to deserve emulation; the religion of the Hindoos, may be fairly tried by this rule; and we may be enabled to discover how far their multiplied representations of the Deity, agree with this test; how far they are adapted to produce energy of mind, or to preserve purity of conduct.

Although, in the Brahminical system, the original source of creation is ascribed to "the great soul" which animates the universe; yet this Sovereign essence, by his own thought or will, created another being, who diffused its active powers. But even this secondary being has long since been divided into three, to express the creative, preserving, and destroying powers of universal nature.

The chief objects of adoration however, at present, among the Hindoos, are now confined to the preserving and destructive powers of the Divinity; the creative power being seldom the object of their fear, or of their regard. But this separation of the different powers, soon led to a personification of them, by symbols expressive

of their nature. That this distinction was made at a very early period, is plain from the Védas themselves: as well as from the Institutes of Menu. To this succeeded that distinction between the efficient and effective powers of the Divinity, which at length so essentially contributed to corrupt the mind.

To unfold the gross enormities, which, in aftertimes, arose from sentiments so degrading of the Divine nature, to disclose those licentious rites, which have been celebrated under the name of religion, but which equally insult the common understanding of mankind, and are offensive to common decency, would be not less useless and improper, than disgusting; neither would they have been hinted at, if sentiments had not been entertained, contrary to sound reason, and false in fact, that these rites, however abhorrent from the sentiments of men instructed in the principles of a purer faith, and accustomed to notions more worthy the Supreme Being, may yet have been practised, without producing any pernicious effects on the character of their votaries; that the frequency of their repetition tends to diminish their hurtful effects on the mind; and that objects which are rendered thus familiar to the view, are at length regarded with indifference.

It will indeed be allowed, that actions, by constant repetition, become habitual, and produce a different effect on the character, from those which are indulged in for the momentary gratification of desire. Neither can it be doubted, that satiety and langour are the necessary consequences of pleasures, strained beyond their proper limits, when they have been pursued rather from custom than inclination. But that the effects on the moral sense are less pernicious, when that sense is blunted and become incapable of farther incitement, is a dangerous error. It is with the mental as with the bodily constitution. That irritable temperament, in which the slightest touch thrills through every pore, and vibrates on every nerve, is less radically dangerous, than that morbid apathy, that insensibility to external impressions, which is the constant harbinger of decay and dissolution, and the most lamentable state of perishing humanity.

From observations which have been made on the moral character of the natives of Hindoostan, this remark cannot but acquire new confirmation. The Hindoos possess not that inflammatory temper, which prompts to excesses, dangerous indeed, but generally transient. They live in that total subjection of the mental faculties, which precludes

the necessity, and even the disposition, to exertion. They are properly described to "exist in a state of subordination, which knows no resistance, and to slumber in a voluptuousness, which knows no wants."*

If the physiological part of their worship possess so little to elevate the mind; that part, which consists in the worship of deified heroes, is far from favourable to any of "those virtues which aggrandize a people." These are, indeed, what their sculptured representations declare them to be, monsters. Of all the sources of mythology, that which was derived from the apotheosis of heroes falsely so called, has produced the greatest practical evil. The honors of deification have always been decreed, by the most fallacious and dangerous appreciation of worth. In the infancy of society, they were usurped by lawless power, and brutal libertinism; in subsequent periods they were offered by groveling adulation to impotent grandeur. When the advocates for idolatrous worship recommend it to protection and favor, as powerfully calling forth emulation; and when, in support of their opinion, they mention Alexander, who was animated to

* Orme.

prosecute his expeditions, by a desire of rivalling Hercules and Bacchus, whom he at length pretended to have excelled; we may freely allow them the use of such an example. Such virtues may, indeed fitly be learned in the pantheon: such may also be found in the Hindoo mythology. But it is very difficult to find examples which contribute to the repose of the world, and to the advancement of human happiness: it will be difficult to prove that such qualities have ever attained the reward of celestial honors, or even that gratitude which should await them.

These are the effects, which the Brahminical representations of the Supreme Being, are calculated to produce on the moral character. These effects may be counteracted by other causes; but they are sufficiently visible in the Hindoo character, to justify the truth of the principles laid down in this Discourse.

We are now to consider the influence of the Brahminical representations of the Divinity, in another point of view; in their tendency to promote the rational happiness, and to gratify the natural desires of man.

That happiness cannot possibly be separated from rectitude of conduct, and that it is inconsistent with the indulgence of corrupt inclinations, there is no necessity to prove. But there are tumultuous pleasures, and there is a supine inactivity, in which happiness is vainly supposed to exist; a happiness unworthy of the name, ever transient and unsatisfactory, and totally different from that pure felicity, which has been rightly termed "the sunshine of the mind."

But even here, the representations which the Brahminical system give of the Deity, form a picture the most gloomy and repulsive. The popular religion of Hindoostan is not, like that of Greece, captivating though corrupt, in which taste displayed all its resources, and pleasure all its charms. It is neither calculated to excite tumultuous mirth, nor to promote temperate enjoyment; but the despondency of settled melancholy, or the frantic ravings of despair. When Heaven itself is represented as a place of discord, can earth be considered as a seat of happiness? When the atmosphere is suffused with dark and impenetrable clouds; when every breeze wafts pestilence and death; can the most beautiful scenes of nature be enjoyed with their proper relish?

The same religion, which has generated a gross and licentious worship, which has given birth to all the disgusting enormities already mentioned, has been equally productive of the most deliberate cruelty, and of the most abject superstition. The same Divine Being, who is represented as delighting in all the impurities of sensual lust, delights also in the blood of human victims. Though the incarnation of the humane Buddha was expressly intended to abolish the sanguinary sacrifices which the Védas prescribe, rites which have never prevailed in their former vigor since the reviving influence of the Brahminical tenets; yet the secret immolation of human victims, and the voluntary oblation of enthusiastic devotees is still practised, and deemed meritorious. The infant is still offered up to appease the wrath of Heaven, and to procure the blessing of a numerous progeny; the aged and expiring are still exposed on the banks of the sacred river, as the most honourable method of terminating an existence too long protracted, and thus ensuring an indisputable title to the enjoyment of future bliss.

The doctrines of the immortality of the soul and of a future state, which, when pure and unsophisticated, are equally adapted to secure the general welfare of society, and to promote

individual happiness, have, by the refinements of Brahminism, been rendered instrumental, both in repressing the exertions of the mind, and in augmenting the miseries of life. Though it is a fundamental tenet in the religion of the Brahmins, that the soul is incorruptible, and is itself "a ray from the infinite spirit," yet, in that re-union of the human soul with the Divine ethereal substance of the universe, which it is imagined will at length take place, all personal consciousness of immortality is excluded; and consequently all personal consciousness of happiness. But before the soul can possibly be absorbed in the Divine essence, to which state it is progressively tending, it must undergo various transmigrations, in order that it may be completely purified from the taints of evil, contracted in this present life.

Hence, while this notion has been the cause of that ridiculous veneration, entertained by the Hindoos for the most loathsome & noxious parts of the animal creation, it has also embittered their present happiness, by recalling to their recollection the idea of an existence, in some former state, of more exalted purity, and of more refined pleasure. "Perhaps" (is the language of one of their dramatic poems) "the sadness of men, otherwise happy, in seeing beautiful forms, and listening to

sweet melody, arises from some faint remembrance of past joys, and the traces of connections in a former state of existence."[b]

This doctrine of the immortality of the soul, which has the happiest tendency to mitigate the calamities of life, has, by a perversion in the Brahminical system, increased their intenseness. Since it pourtrays the universe as a cheerless prison, from which the soul is continually struggling to be free: it, not unfrequently, prompts a premature termination of an existence, which can at the best be considered, only as a state of painful servitude. "What relish can there be for enjoyment in this body, assailed by desire and wrath, by avarice and illusion, fear and sorrow, envy and hate, by absence from those whom we love, and by union with those whom we dislike, by hunger and thirst, by disease and emaciation, by growth and decline, by old age and death?"[c]

From the facts which have been stated in this discussion, two important conclusions will arise. The first will shew the practical tendency of a refined system of metaphysics, when it operates on the religious sentiments of a whole people.

[b] Sacontala.
[c] Extract from the Védas.

By those who are inclined to view both the religion and character of the Hindoos, in a favourable light, it is objected, as a want of candour, that the corruptions, arising from vulgar superstition, have been improperly stated as the genuine principles of their creed. But to this we may reply, that the opinions and customs, stated in this Discourse, are the necessary result of their institutions, and, sometimes, in conformity to their positive and express injunctions. Popular religion can never consist in abstract ideas; it must have a body. It has been truly observed, that the Brahminical tenets concerning the Deity, perfectly coincide with those of the Stoical school; and if an accurate definition were given of Brahminism, it might be described, as a religion, in which the subtile spirit, which characterized the doctrines of the porch, has animated the great mass of vulgar superstition. But we may here perceive, in what manner the most lofty speculations become a prolific source of error, when operating as regulations of popular manners. If those speculations had been confined to the sages of Benares, as they were to the sages of Athens, they might have been regarded as the offspring of refined sensibility; and though few would have been willing, or able, to follow them, many would have been induced to admire, and none would have been willing

harshly to condemn. But when these ideas are embodied, and assume a tangible form, we are irresistibly led to conclude, how useless and how pernicious the sophistry of the Stoical school must have been, in the regulation of human conduct.

The facts, which have now been laid down, will also direct to another and different conclusion. They will contribute to decide, how far the national character may be influenced by climate; and how far the power of religious enthusiasm may exclude climate from any share in its formation. We here behold a people, living under a temperature favourable to voluptuousness, and, in some measure, taking the complexion of their national character from its influence: living in that state of oscitancy, which arises from natural imbecility, or oppressed by that lassitude, which proceeds from intemperate gratification.

But we also see the same people, when the force of religious impressions stimulates their natural indolence, displaying instances of self-denial, of laborious and painful exertion, which almost exceed belief.

We may behold the native of Hindoostan, whose form is naturally of a tender texture, and

whose body is enfeebled by age, patient of fatigue, careless of danger, taking his long and painful journey from the Ganges to the Volga, to offer up a prayer, at the shrine of his God. We may behold him, at another time, relinquishing every worldly connection, subduing every feeling of self-love, and all the sympathies of social life, "motionless as a tree, and fixing his eyes on the solar orb," till exhausted nature sinks, or despair prompts him to devote himself to the fury of the flood or fire.

But, what is still more decisive to the purpose, and what shews the irresistible force of religious impressions, we may perceive the followers of the religion of Mohammed, and the professors of the Brahminical faith, living in the same country, breathing the same atmosphere, and therefore subject to the same effects from climate; each still retaining those remarkable peculiarities, which the genius of two religions, so diametrically opposite, inspires. In some of their institutions, such as those which prohibit the indulgence of inebriating liquors, or which permit the almost unrestrained gratification of sensual desire, they assimilate; but even the common observer may distinguish the discriminating lines, which mark the difference of their faith.

The force of religion can, of itself, combat the influence of climate, or counteract the want of bodily strength. It can form the Ascetic and the Devotee, under the burning rays of an eastern sun; it can form the Sybarite under the invigorating influence of a temperate clime.

And chiefly that part of religion, which exclusively consists of our ideas concerning the Supreme Being, and the nature of our devotion to him, will be instrumental in forming the character. That course of life which is deemed the most acceptable to him, will be pursued and persevered in, however repugnant to all the feelings of nature, however detrimental to the interests of society, however painful in its execution, or however useless in its tendency.

Happy then are they, who live under the benign influence of a religion, in which the Deity is represented, not as a stern and inflexible tyrant, delighting in the sufferings of his slaves: but as a kind and compassionate parent, who rejoices in the happiness of his offspring; in which human life is represented, not as a state of servitude, but as a state of discipline; in which the Almighty does not address himself to man in the accents of terror, but speaks to him in the

same consolotary voice, in which he once proclaimed himself to his chosen people of old: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, abundant in goodness and truth."

DISCOURSE VII.

ON THE BRAHMINICAL SYSTEM IN ITS OPERATION ON THE INTELLECTUAL FACULTIES.

The Causes which contribute to depress the intellectual Faculties of the Hindoos derived from their Religion—The Division of Society into Castes—The comprehension of Science in their Scheme of Revelation—The Incorporation of their Civil Institutions with their Religious System. Their Chronological Scheme — Superiority of Europe over Asia, attributable to the Genius of the Christian Religion.

DISCOURSE VII.

ON THE BRAHMINICAL SYSTEM IN ITS OPERATION ON THE INTELLECTUAL FACULTIES.

ROMANS 14, v. 17.

The Kingdom of God is not Meat and Drink, but Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost.

TO form a just estimate of the comparative excellence of Christian morality, and of its influence on the human character, it is requisite to consider the precepts of the Gospel, not only in a positive, but also in a negative view. Some duties and obligations are enforced with a degree of strictness and precision, to be sought in vain elsewhere; but the Christian revelation does not fix what should be left indeterminate, and has always declined to interfere in those cases, where interference would be sometimes unnecessary, and sometimes prejudicial. And it has effected this purpose, not only by disregarding many of those qualities so highly applauded by the world, and some of which have been thought

essential to the existence of political society; it not only neglects to form the Patriot and fire the Hero, but, satisfied with laying down a few comprehensive rules of conduct, it never directs their application to particular cases. Though it commands, in the most unequivocal terms, the observance of temperance and self-denial; yet it has not defined the exact limits where rational enjoyment ends, and criminal excess begins. Though it inculcates the fundamental principles of equity and justice; yet it never descends to discuss them with forensic prolixity, or forensic minuteness; nor does it specify exceptions and limitations to plain and indubitable rules of practice. Though it directs, that some part of human life should be employed in the necessary occupations of secular industry, and that some part should be devoted to religious meditation; yet it does not ascertain, with rigid and undeviating formality, the precise quantity of time requisite for each; but leaves the question, to be decided by existing circumstances, and by the conscience of the individual. Contented with giving a right impulse to the motions of the heart, it does not pretend to regulate them, with the exactness of mechanical oscillation; but leaves them to be biassed by external causes; by causes which will sometimes accelerate, and sometimes retard their ordinary

course; by causes, which it is not less easy to foresee, than impossible to control.

Should this distinguishing character of Christian morality, appear to merit no higher praise, than that of maintaining a decorous and consistent reserve, concerning the ordinary concerns of life, which badly accord with the awful grandeur of religious sanctions; yet this negative excellence may claim a higher commendation, and is productive of more important advantages.

The first advantage is, that the morality of the Christian religion, being contained in a short compass, is always ready for use in the conduct of life. Of the Mussulman code we are informed, that it consists of not less than seventy-five thousand traditional precepts; and of the sacred literature of the Hindoos, it has been said, that "the longest life would not be sufficient for the perusal of near five hundred thousand stanzas in the Purànas, and a million more perhaps in other works."[4] Moral precepts, applied to such a variety of cases, and on such a variety of subjects, must perplex, rather than enlighten; must leave room for cavil and evasion, rather than afford a

[4] Sir W. Jones.

specific direction, in any emergency of moral doubt.

The next excellence of Christian morality, and which essentially distinguishes it from every other mode of religious faith, is, that this silence on many points of "doubtful disputation," renders Christianity "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Had its injunctions been contained in a code of jurisprudence, or comprised in a regular compendium of ethical maxims, they would have received a tincture from the opinions and customs of the country wherein they originated. But Christianity, being an historical religion, although it abounds in references and allusions to the theatre, on which the events which it records were transacted; has nothing of that locality, which could confine its progress, or limit its duration. Though the tree was first planted in Judea, yet it stretches out its branches unto the "sea, and its boughs unto the river;" it flourishes not in any peculiar soil, but in climates the most remote from the spot, where it first arose to overshadow the world.

It is on this account, that the Christian Religion is the only faith capable of universal extension; for whatever variations may take place in the

course of worldly affairs, it is not in the least affected by them. At it lays down no particular form of civil government, or system of political economy, it survives the dissolution of states and empires; or assimilates itself to any alterations and improvements which wisdom or expediency may suggest in their administration. As it dictates neither theories in philosophy, nor axioms in science, it has left mankind free to adopt improvements and discoveries in either. As it prescribes no regulations with respect to the customs of domestic life, or to the different modes of social intercourse, it permits those changes which constantly take place in them, from the innocent love of novelty, and the progress of refinement. Thus it is not a fabric, which though composed of durable materials, may, in a series of ages be rendered less beautiful or less commodious, but is equally calculated to resist the assaults of external violence, and to withstand the silent decay of time.

But the highest commendation of Christian morality, derived from its negative excellence, is the unconstrained exercise, which it allows to the intellectual powers of man. Christianity has left the mind free. While the perfection of the mental faculties in a future state, is pre-

posed as an encouragement to exertion; it has opposed, in the present state, no obstacle to impede their progressive improvement.

In proof of this assertion, we may allege, that if Christianity be the only religion capable of universal extension, it is also the only religion, which, if confined to a single nation, would allow and enable that nation to preserve a necessary intercourse with the rest of the world, and to maintain its rank in the political scale, without violating any of its fundamental precepts or departing from its genuine spirit.

This cannot be said of any other religion ever promulgated. Experience must have taught us how frequently nations, not professing the Christian Religion, have been obstructed in their necessary exertion, either of precautionary defence, or in the cultivation of many of the arts of peace. But "the Kingdom of God" is not confined to place, nor bounded by the barriers of the earth or ocean. It has not restricted the spirit of inquiry and adventure, the pursuit of knowledge, or the prosecution of commercial industry: nor has it fixed a river, or a chain of mountains, as the limit, beyond which to pass, is an act not only of danger, but of

impiety. Of many forms of religion we may almost say, that they are indigenous. They derive their efficacy, and even their substance, from some local peculiarity; and are like any other natural production of the soil. But "the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink," it is connected with no national ordinances, which prohibit the use of any of the bounties which nature has freely dispensed, but they are left to be enjoyed as expediency may direct, or as choice may dictate.

And, if a single Christian nation could preserve a necessary intercourse, with others of a different faith, without violating any injunction of Christian morality; so a single individual professing the Christian faith, might live, in any part of the world, with any sect, under any climate, under any form of government, without transgressing any command of his own religion, without any privation of necessary enjoyment, and without any sacrifice of integrity.

The method by which all other religions have established their authority, and preserved their influence over the minds of their votaries, has been exactly the reverse. They have begun by binding, under religious sanctions, what might

properly be left to the regulation of human laws. They have included every object, either of speculative science, or of practical wisdom. They have even modelled the forms of social intercourse; and, from regulating the disputations of the schools, they have descended to prescribe the beverage of the banquet. Thus they have contributed to fetter the mind, by confining the exercise of its powers, by fixing limits to its pursuits, and impeding its free exertions. Formed to meet the present exigency, and without any prospective view to the condition, the interests, and the wants of distant generations, they have marked out a state of society which is to admit of no change or improvement. They have always opposed, with inflexible obstinacy, any attempt to alter those stationary manners, which they had originally introduced.

Thus many Pagan nations are, at the present time, what they have ever been, since the earliest periods of authentic history: the state of India in the time of Alexander, is, with little variation, its present state. The same distinctions in society take place; nearly the same objects of worship are holden in veneration; the same arts are cultivated. With the progressive improvements of the world, either in natural philosophy,

or in moral and political wisdom, the inhabitants of India have had no concern. The light which has been reflected on them, by their intercourse with those nations, whom avarice, ambition, and curiosity have allured to their shores, they have endeavoured as far as possible to resist; and the very slight variation, which has arisen in their manners, from their contact with their different conquerors, may be said to proceed from a necessity almost physical.

In the preceding discourse, some of the defects, inherent in the Brahminical system were pointed out, with respect to the practical influence which their ideas, and representations, of the Supreme Being, were calculated to produce on their national character. It yet remains to consider the influence of their religious institutions on the intellectual faculties, and on the social affections. The present discourse will be confined to the former of these subjects, reserving to another occasion the consideration of their effects on the affections of the heart, and their tendency to promote private happiness, and universal benevolence.

Without discussing the question, whether mankind may be gradually though slowly increasing in wisdom and virtue, with the age of the world:

or whether the world may be in a perpetual revolution from ignorance to knowledge, and from barbarism to refinement; it is certain, that a variation in local circumstances has caused, in different periods of society, a different application of the intellectual powers of man. They cannot without violence be continually directed to the same pursuits. Perhaps the difference between one age and another, consists, rather in the diversity of the objects to which the mental faculties have been applied, than to any difference in the natural powers of the mind itself. If, for instance, a knowledge of the powers of mechanism, has, in former ages, been applied, to raise the massive column, to erect the lofty pyramid, and to form those vast structures, which seem to deride the pigmy efforts of more degenerate days; in the present times it has been more successfully directed, to augment the comforts of domestic life, to operations, which, though more minute are not less useful; which demonstrate equal fertility of invention, and equal comprehension of genius. But this difference in the application of the intellectual powers, is, perhaps necessary, to prevent their total stagnation; and eminence in either science or art, has never been attained, but by the free exertion of the mind, uncontrolled by civil regulations, or by the more powerful sanctions of religious opinion.

The first institution then, in the Brahminical system, which more than any other, contributes to check this necessary freedom, and to depress the mental energies, is that artificial line of division, which has been drawn between the different orders of society; a line of separation, which it is impossible to pass; and which is not only guarded by the prescriptions of law, but fortified by the adamantine and impregnable barriers of the divine decree. At the creation of the world, each of the four primary castes, is said to have proceeded immediately from the Divinity; and to mingle, or to confound, what He has thus originally separated, must be a deed of the most daring impiety.

To enquire minutely into the numerous subdivisions, which have branched out from these primary orders, and to ascertain the different modifications of caste, which have taken place throughout Hindoostan, might present a subject worthy of attention. But the effects of such an institution can be argued, here, only on a general view.

Unnatural and arbitrary as this division has eventually proved, and favourable, as it must necessarily be, to the exercise of despotism, it

has, not unfrequently, been defended, as singularly adapted to secure the end, which must have been in the view of those, who first formed it. It has been said, that the human mind accommodates itself, without a murmur, to the law of necessity; that the native of Hindoostan patiently acquiesces in an institution so repugnant to our feelings; and that thus knowing, from his birth, the station allotted to him, and the duties peculiar to that station; as the objects which relate to these, are the first and sole presented to his view, he has no other to inflame his desires. He is therefore a stranger to the fatal effects of inordinate ambition. It has been also alleged, that this division is the most undoubted proof of the early and high civilization of the Hindoos, and of their perfection in the art of government; and that the arrangements of government are judiciously made, not for the Few, but for the Many; not for individual convenience, but for public advantage. It has been finally asserted, that to this institution may be attributed the astonishing perfection of the inhabitants of India in their manufactures, which exhibit a dexterity, unrivalled by Europeans, with all the advantages of superior science.

If we may be allowed to assign a cause for

an institution so singular, we may imagine it to have been, at its commencement, nothing more than a necessary division of labor, among the different orders of society. It might, at first, have been morally innocent, as well as politically useful. It must have been long, before the different gradations in society, could have been immutably fixed, and rivetted by the chains of an inexorable superstition. But, that in its present state, and its present state is the necessary result of such a regulation, it can have a tendency to increase national prosperity, is a position that equally contradicts reason, and experience.

From the time when our acquaintance with the history of India begins, its inhabitants, so far from possessing any political importance, have ever groaned under the dominion of a foreign yoke. They have dragged the chains of an ignominious servitude for ages, under a people, whose numbers have scarcely exceeded a tenth part of their own population. In a country, where an order of men is set apart, expressly for the protection of the rest; a class, whom the enthusiasm of some historians has represented to be "mighty in martial deeds;" it must appear wonderful, that this spirit could be so completely extinguished. It must appear wonderful, if this institution

of castes, were really as beneficial as is contended, that in a mode of life, where superiority is generally the result of skill, and where skill is derived from experience, the warriors of India should so long have slumbered in supine indifference. That an order of men, like the sacerdotal order, to whom is entrusted the care of science, as well as of religion, should, in modern times, have so far degenerated from their antient pre-eminence, is another proof of the impolicy of this regulation; plainly demonstrating, that where knowledge is not permitted generally to expand, knowledge is itself diminished; when it is, at first, from interested motives, confined to a few, it is, at length, neglected by all. That the inhabitants of India may have excelled in the labors of the loom, and that their manufactures are so remarkable for delicacy of texture, is not to be imputed to the institution of a commercial caste, but to the suppleness of their frame, to the formation of their bodies, and above all, to the remarkable configuration of their hands. But, whatever superiority may be visible in their execution of many useful arts, the exercise of others is absolutely prohibited by their religion; and the scrupulous adherence, with which they follow the practices of their ancestors, has entirely checked the spirit of invention.

The fact is, that this example, drawn from the history of the Hindoo nation, will considerably tend to solve the problem so long debated—how far the powers of industry and application can supply the want of natural genius; and also to ascertain that important question in political philosophy—how far it is prudent to warp the natural bent of the mind, by the artificial regulations of civil government. From this example it will appear, that to prevent the intellectual powers from exerting their native strength, and from following those objects to which the impulse of innate genius would prompt them, will soon bring on an indifference to every pursuit, and at length leave the mind in total oscitancy. Whatever external force, and mechanical adroitness can effect, will be comparatively trivial, when put in competition with the elastic power of unconstrained and voluntary exertion.

The character of the Hindoos, from their being thus fixed, from their birth, in this unalterable state, from which no efforts of their own, and no casualty of fortune can possibly remove them, is marked by nothing of that vigor and decision, inseparable from competition in pursuits and collision of interests. Hence this favourite maxim, which they constantly repeat, seems to govern

their conduct. "It is better to sit than to stand, to lie down than to sit, to sleep than to wake, and death is the best of all." In those occupations, which require perseverance without exertion, and which demand only that degree of attention, which permits the current of thought to glide on in uninterrupted indolence, they excel; but they uniformly shrink from attempts of hazard and of enterprize. They prefer a lazy apathy to the agitations of active life, and think it sufficient to pass through existence, with the negative merit of having neither disturbed their own repose, nor that of the world, by intemperate ambition.

But, that this regulation in the religion of the Hindoos, is lamentably inefficient to produce the ends originally designed, is farther evident, from the deviations, which they have been compelled to make, from its literal interpretation: from the injudicious attempts which they have made to soften its inflexibility, and to moderate its rigor.

Their law has permitted the mixed classes, which have sprung from the intermarriages of the four first, to gain a subsistence by agriculture, commerce, or menial service. The same law

has also permitted, with a few limitations, such, as cannot procure a subsistence by following the duties and occupations of their own class, to pursue those of another. Yet even this seemingly wise provision, a provision which might have been used to better purposes, has been converted, by the Hindoo priesthood, to their own interested designs, to gratify their avarice; a passion which takes deep root in their minds, and which always preys on minds not stimulated by nobler objects. It has enabled the Brahminical order to follow their inordinate love of wealth, by insinuating themselves into offices of trust and emolument. It has enabled them to administer to their interest, without derogating from their sacred character, or injuring their reputation in the eyes of their followers. But this provision has proposed no incitement, it has not even given permission, to the subordinate castes to aspire to eminence. The sacred order, to which is entrusted "the key of knowlege" must be preserved unpolluted; into that, none of the inferior classes can enter.

When to this is added, that the Brahminical order alone is permitted to read the sacred oracles, that the military class is only permitted to hear them recited, and that, to the lower castes, who compose the greater number, even

this privelege is denied, it may easily be perceived, that while the mind is enthralled by arbitrary tyranny, the moral character will be proportionably sunk, as being entirely dependant on the caprice of the same despotic influence.

And, if the religion of the Hindoos has a natural tendency to depress the mental faculties, by assigning, to each individual, the sole objects of his legitimate pursuit; it has still farther contributed to this effect, by making science itself a subject of divine revelation. When we revert to the periods of Papal ignorance, and find the celebrated Galileo subjected to a rigorous confinement for his astronomical discoveries, we are strongly impressed with the futility of comprehending, under religion, matters, entirely irrelevant to its design. But, in the religion of the Hindoos, every fine art is declared to be revealed from heaven; and all knowledge, speculative or practical, is traced to its source in the Védas. A revealed code of morality, and a revealed science, both agree in this respect; they equally preclude all change or improvement. But it is not less necessary for the happiness of mankind, that the first should be unalterably fixed, than that the latter should be enlarged by invention, and corrected by experience.

Another circumstance, connected with the former, which tends decidedly to check the progress of knowledge among the Hindoos, is, the peculiarity of incorporating their civil code of laws, with their other moral and religious institutions. It was this peculiarity which rendered the Jewish people, what, for wise reasons, they were designed to be, a people separated from the rest of the world; a people, who while they were "men in religion, were children in every thing else." It is the same peculiarity which renders the Hindoos so hostile to improvement; and to this may, in a great degree, be imputed, that singularity of manners, which they have so long retained. As their laws are supposed to be derived immediately from Heaven, they are of eternal and immutable obligation; as they were really the production of human wisdom, though they might be sufficiently adapted to the time in which they were first promulgated, yet the regulations which they enjoin, are often absurd, often prejudicial, and often impracticable. They sometimes disgust by their puerility, and sometimes shock by their unnatural rigor. The most trivial duties of ordinary life, are discussed with the greatest gravity; the succession of property is regulated by maxims, which no change in external circumstances must alter; contracts are

specified according to every imaginable, or perhaps, possible case; the regulations of commercial intercourse are prescribed with the most circumstantial exactness. Thus the civil code of the Hindoos, far from resembling the jejune brevity of the twelve tables, has been celebrated as bearing a comparison with the digest of Justinian, in the number and the variety of the subjects which it discusses; and it has assumed, what the code of Justinian never assumed, the authority of divine and immutable sanction. While the one, being modified by the varying circumstances, and more liberal spirit of modern times, is a valuable repository of legal knowlege, and is still beneficial for the purposes of equity; the other has been converted into an engine of mischievous superstition, and has become pernicious in proportion to its duration.

It appears indeed to have been the intention of Providence, that the course of Nature should be subject to fluctuations, though the fundamental Laws, by which the world is governed, are immutable; and that, in political governments, nothing should be fixed, but those eternal barriers of justice, which no length of time can alter, no art of man can destroy. With respect to all institutions, merely human, it seems to have

been the design of Heaven to mock the pride of man, who wishes to direct the actions of posterity as well as those of his contemporaries, and endeavours to make his own wisdom the rule of conduct for future generations. Such arrogant pretensions Time always confutes; and the vain, though laudable, artifice, by which the Athenian legislator attempted to secure perpetual obedience to his laws, has been frustrated, not only by the fickle disposition of his countrymen, but by the revolution of Time, who has laid in ruins Athens herself, and rendered her polity, her wisdom, and her eloquence merely themes of curious speculation, or subjects for declamatory praise.

To the causes already mentioned, arising from their religious and civil institutions, which operate towards the mental depression of the Hindoos, may be added another, which contributes to increase their natural inactivity. This may be found in the mortifying and melancholy prospect, which their chronological scheme gives, of the future condition of the human race. It is supposed by the Brahmins, that Man is in a progressive state of mental degeneracy, as well as of diminution of bodily stature, and bodily strength. That happy æra has long since rolled away, when the life of man was extended to myriads

of years; when peace and innocence resided on the earth; when the mind of man could comprehend every material object, and every moral truth; and when his corporeal strength could remove mountains. In the present degraded condition of man, nothing of this kind is to be expected, or hoped. But the time will arrive, when even the present degeneracy of the world shall become greater: when every species of depravity shall more and more abound: and when, together with the decay of his intellectual powers, the stature of man shall be so lessened, that he shall not be able, by his natural strength, to pluck the smallest plant from the earth.

It may easily be perceived, that a prospect, thus gloomy, must powerfully operate on minds easily terrified by religious impressions: and that it must afford every encouragement to that love of indolence, which invariably adheres to the Hindoo character. To be able to attain no higher eminence than the feeble consolation of being the first among a race which is continually growing worse; to feel a conviction, that the highest exertions will be insufficient to prevent this deterioration of posterity; to reflect, that each returning day brings with it a fresh accession to the sum of human corruption and of human

misery; while such a conviction must, on the one hand, inspire a hatred of existence in the present state, it must also produce that disinclination to exertion, which is, of itself, sufficient to render life insupportable.

These then, are some of the primary causes which necessarily paralize the intellect, and consequently depress the character. These causes are not remote and contingent; they are immediate and irresistible. These articles of belief, which have been specified are inseparably incorporated with the religious system of the Brahmins, and indeed form its substance.

But it yet remains to shew, that these causes have really produced their correspondent effects: that they have actually forwarded the mental subjugation of the inhabitants of Hindoostan.

In the first place, their total abstinence from animal food, and their veneration for some of the most noxious parts of the animal creation, have, in their general effects, proved strong impediments to agricultural improvement, and, in many instances, have aggravated, if not caused, the miseries of famine.

Their dread of shedding human blood, has prevented them from studying the anatomy of the human frame, and from applying this science to the purposes of medicine. Their total abhorrence from maritime voyages, arising from religious prohibition, has prevented them from enjoying a general intercourse with distant parts of the world, either for purposes of commerce, or for the gratification of useful curiosity; and they have seldom seen the face of a stranger, but to recognize in him an enemy. In short, there is scarcely an art which embellishes life, or a science which strengthens the faculties, which is not, in some manner, brought under the domination of their superstition, and is not either prohibited, or restrained, or controlled, by their religious creed.

If, in addition to the arguments, which have been already urged, to prove the inseparable connection between mental ignorance and moral degradation, and the powerful influence of religion on the removal of both, any exemplification should be thought necessary; this may be fairly instanced, in the superiority of Europe over Asia; a superiority acquired, and retained, by intellectual strength: and this intellectual pre-eminence, arising from the profession of a religion favourable to the progress of knowledge. And, if there be

any truth in the popular apophthegm, that "knowledge is power," its propriety and its justice will here be forcibly asserted.

That a diversity formerly subsisted, in the manners of the inhabitants of these two different parts of the world, the voice of history abundantly testifies. It is well known to have been the chief wish of Alexander, among his other vast projects, to reconcile this remarkable dissimilarity. After his death, there was found among his tablets or commentaries, a design, to build several new cities, some in Asia, and some in Europe; to people those in Asia with Europeans, and those in Europe with Asiatics: that by inter-marriages, and by the constant interchange of the common offices of social life, the inhabitants of these two great continents might be gradually moulded into a similarity of sentiment, and become attached to each other, by mutual affection.

But, whatever this diversity might have once been, it was not such as we find at present. The rich and powerful empires of the Asiatic continent, might once have disputed, with the greatest kingdoms of the western world, pre-eminence, either in science, or in martial prowess, or in political wisdom. There was nothing of that

complete subjection on the one hand, and of that unqualified superiority on the other, which is now felt and acknowledged. The boast of the Athenian poet, that Asia was formed to be the hand-maid of Europe, was far distant from sober truth, at the period when it was uttered. It was not true, when the Indian monarch, gigantic in mind as well as in stature, defended with noble intrepidity, his territories, against the insatiable ambition of Alexander; and preserved his courage undaunted, both in defeat and in captivity. It was not true, at a subsequent æra, when the whole western world was torn by feuds and religious dissentions, and when the followers of Mohammed brought their proud independance, and their romantic chivalry into Spain, and established the most absolute authority, from the confines of Tartary and India, to the shores of the Atlantic ocean. It was not true, at a still later period, when, by the arms of the Mogul dynasty, the globe itself was shaken from China to Poland, and the Ottoman power became the scourge and the terror of Europe.

But it has been reserved to these times, to see this boast completely verified. It has been reserved to these times, to see the haughty potentates of the East, with the countless myriads under

their dominion, acknowledging the superiority and yielding to the sway of the nations of the western world: tacitly admitting the excellence of their civil institutions, and of their religious faith. This superiority began to be felt and acknowledged, when the pure doctrines of the Christian faith were separated from the additions of human craft, or human folly: when the eyes of mankind were, at length, opened to the errors and superstitions of the Romish Church, by which they had been so long enslaved; and religion and science re-appeared together, to bless and to enlighten the world. It was then, that the benign influence of the genius of the Gospel, was sensibly felt; and if Asia be now indeed the handmaid of Europe, Europe has attained dominion, by conquering under the banner of the cross.

The elegant and rational Jortin, with a warmth which the subject justifies, and which, if the professors of Christianity have any cause for glory, or if Christianity were capable of inspiring ostentatious vanity, might be enlarged on with greater force, and emblazoned with greater eloquence—has enumerated many of those advantages, for which the world is indebted to the Christian Religion; and which have, in more

senses than one, proved the assertion of its divine author to be true, "I am the light of the world."

In the same spirit, and with the same success, may we apply his observation to the subject which has now been under contemplation, the superiority of the European to the Asiatic continent.

We may boldly ask, by whom was the design first formed and attempted, of encountering the fury of distant seas, when navigation was yet in its infancy, with the laudable desire of rescuing the commerce of the eastern world, from the despotic influence of Mohammedism?—by Christians. By whom was this influence at length subdued? and by whom were the riches of Asia, diverted from the Persian Gulph, to the shores of the Adriatic and the Mediterranean?—by Christians. In spite of the exaggerated aspersions of prejudice, of ignorance, or of party, on the European character in the East, we may again confidently ask, where in the records of history, shall we first behold the factorial establishment of a commercial nation, erecting an absolute empire over a population of more than sixty millions; while the best security of that establishment is founded on the opinion which the inhabitants entertain of the superior wisdom and integrity of foreign

settlers?—among a nation of Christians. From whom did the humane and liberal idea originate, that the natives should be governed by those laws which they have so long revered as divine, and which alone they are qualified to appreciate, while at the same time, the stern code of Menu should be softened by that spirit, which dictated the institutions of Alfred?—from Christians. Where shall we first see the singular spectacle of the refined Asiatics, willingly flying for protection to the arms of strangers; seeking redress for injuries in their courts of justice; following them to the field of battle, with a confidence in their invincible strength; tacitly owning the benefits of their administration; and proving that, if the Aristotelian maxim be true, that "the Asiatics are born to be slaves," yet subjugation itself may become a blessing, when absolute power is exercised by freemen?—in a colonial establishment, formed by Christians. Finally, where shall we see an European nation, differing indeed as to the means, but agreeing as to the end, endeavouring with parental care to meliorate the condition of a vast empire, which the inscrutable destinies of Providence have committed to its protection, not indeed by sudden innovation and wild theories of reform, but by that cautious and gradual propagation of truth, which is

requisite to ensure its ultimate and complete success?—in a colonial establishment, formed by Christians.

Let us indulge a pious gratitude for the enjoyment of the blessings of religious truth: for these are the triumphs of Christianity; let us feel a pious exultation as Britons: for these triumphs are our's.

DISCOURSE VIII.

ON THE BRAHMINICAL SYSTEM IN ITS OPERATION ON THE SOCIAL AFFECTIONS.

Difference between the exclusive Pretensions of Christianity to a Divine Origin, and the Indifference of Paganism to the speculative Opinions of other Nations—Peculiar Tenet in the Brahminical System—The Brahminical Religion intolerant—Defence of the Christian Tenet of universal extension, in its tendency to promote universal Benevolence.

DISCOURSE VIII.

ON THE BRAHMINICAL SYSTEM IN ITS OPERATION ON THE SOCIAL AFFECTIONS.

COLOSSIANS 3, v. 11.

There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free; but Christ is all and in all.

IT has been frequently objected by the enemies of our religion, that while Christianity professes to inculcate a benevolence undistinguishing and universal, many of those sentiments, which expand and refine the social feelings, are regarded with an eye of indifference, if not of hostility.—That the virtues of patriotism and of private friendship, if not prohibited, are passed over without their due commendation. That the morality of the Gospel encourages a passion, which, although it may dazzle, can never warm; a passion, which can only evaporate in empty declamation, & can never be efficacious in the conduct of life: while it has

neglected to enforce that less exalted but more useful sympathy, which proves its benevolence to all, by its kindness to a few.

While these objections have been insinuated with a design of depreciating Christianity in the estimation of those who regard it merely as an engine of state policy, and who hold every form of religion in equal indifference, as having no other object than to preserve the good order of society; another objection, the reverse of the former, has been urged, with still more plausibility and success, to degrade it in the opinion of those who assume a more enlarged liberality, and a philosophy elevated above the prejudices of vulgar superstition.

It has been said that this doctrine of Universal Benevolence, of which the Christian religion boasts, though extended beyond those limits which might render it productive of local benefit, is contracted by others, which prevent it from promoting general utility. Though this benevolence easily surmounts every barrier of national distinction, though it professes to cherish with equal affection the inhabitants of every climate and country, yet it has drawn another line of separation equally arbitrary, and equally impass-

able. Though in the chart of Christian philanthrophy, the geographical division of a chain of mountains, of a river, or of the ocean are obliterated, yet there is another boundary marked out, which all the selfish passions of the heart will more vigilantly defend. If the superstitious follower of Brahmà trembles at the thought of crossing the sacred river, lest, by setting his feet on unhallowed ground, he may contract pollution; the believer in Christianity sees before his eyes "a great gulph fixed" which, like the boundaries of heaven and hell, can never be passed. Though the Gospel has levelled every distinction between "the Jew and the Greek, barbarian, and Scythian, bond and free;" yet it has preserved another distinction, still more invidious, between the believer and the infidel. This distinction affords ample room for all the unsocial passions of the human heart to display themselves. Partialities arising from country and kindred however strong, may be counteracted by a general intercourse with mankind; and the patriot may be taught to consider himself a citizen of the world; but, the affections and antipathies arising from religious opinion, who can surmount? Though Greece could stigmatize the inhabitants of all other countries with the epithet of barbarians, yet even Greece has enrolled the Scythian Anacharsis

among the number of her sages. But where shall we find a counterpoise against the supercilious bigotry, which the following harsh injunction of a religious teacher is adapted to excite? "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness, and what concord hath Christ with Belial, or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel, and what agreement hath the temple of Goth with idols?"

In order to place these allegations in a stronger light, intolerance to the religious opinions of other nations has been represented as characterising the professors of the Christian faith, and has often been contrasted with that liberality and forbearance on speculative points, which are said to form a striking feature in the history of the nations professing polytheism. If their own tenets were absurd, yet they never attempted to obtrude them on the belief of others; if the tenets of other sects appeared to them erroneous, yet they treated them with respect, or at least suffered them to remain unmolested. This temper of accommodation to ignorance and prejudice, was admirably fitted to preserve the peace of society, and to prevent those feuds and animosities, which have distracted the world since the introduction of Christianity.

On most other points, whenever the morality of Paganism, and the morality of the Gospel are compared together, it has been the practice of those who would depreciate the latter, to assimilate them as far as possible; to shew that in many instances, where the Author of the Christian faith professes to give "a new commandment," that new commandment is nothing more than what has been previously enforced by the sages of antiquity. Thus, if the Christian precept of forgiveness of injuries, and of love towards enemies be adduced, the same duty is said to be enforced in that beautiful couplet of the Hindoos, which pronounces "the duty of a good man even in the moment of his destruction to consist not only in forgiving, but even in a desire of benefiting his destroyer; as the sandal tree even in the moment of its overthrow sheds perfume on the axe that fells it." But in those precepts which prescribe the degree of benevolence due to those who differ in matters of religious opinion, it is here that Pagan liberality is set in opposition to Christian intolerance, to that contracted disposition which fixes the standard of truth to the size of its own opinion, and by the measure of this opinion, deals out its beneficence.

It was the observation of an acute adversary of

the Christian faith, that "the most refined systems of faith have always been the most intolerant;" and when Francklin dictated his celebrated parable on persecution, he seems to have written with a view of inculcating the same idea. The insinuation, if it were true, might tend to establish a conclusion very different from that, which they who allege it, either wish or are aware of. A system of deistical philosophy divested of all positive ordinances, and of all revealed precepts, would probably be pronounced by its advocates the most refined; and it would hence follow that the Deist must be the most intolerant of all men; a consequence which the history of past times shews not to be entirely without foundation.

But it will now be shewn how far this insinuation is applicable towards proving the superiority of Pagan benevolence.

Among all the different modifications of Paganism, which have been exhibited and praised, as inspiring this benevolence and forbearance, the Brahminical system has been the most highly commended, for the liberality of its sentiments, and for the toleration which it so frequently, and it cannot be denied, eloquently enforces.

"God is" by them declared to be "the God

of all mankind. The Pagan and the Mussulman are equally in his presence. Distinctions of color are of his ordination. To vilify the religions or customs of other men, is to set at nought the pleasure of the Almighty. When we deface a picture, we naturally incur the resentment of the Painter; and justly has the Poet said—presume not to arraign or scrutinize the various works of power divine."

It has indeed been asserted by one who might be thought qualified to judge on the subject, that if ever superstition produced a universal good, it is in Hindoostan, where we see it made the foundation of universal benevolence.

There will be no difficulty in shewing, that these indiscriminate commendations, which have been bestowed on the tolerance and liberality of polytheism, either in ancient or in modern times, have been admitted with little controversy, only because they have been urged with unbounded confidence. They have been adopted from distant and partial views of the subject, by no means from an accurate investigation of the practical effects of Paganism.

The forbearance which is said to characterise

the Religion of Pagan Greece or Rome consists in positive assertion, and not on any conclusions drawn from historical facts. These will support rather a contrary opinion. It is not from that spirit of persecution which could condemn Anaxagoras or Socrates to death, that we select a solitary example to prove a broad assertion: but from regulations which decidedly shew their whole religious constitution to have been founded on intolerance. We shall hear Mæcenas though polished by Augustan refinement and enervated by Epicurean indifference, giving the following advice to the Emperor of the civilized world: "perform divine worship in all things exactly according to the practice of your ancestors, and compel others to do the same; and as for those who make innovations in Religion, detest and punish them, and that not only for the sake of the Gods, but because they who introduce new Deities, excite others to make changes in civil affairs." The faith of the ancient world was loose rather than comprehensive; its forbearance proceeded from a spirit of indifference; but its rigor was exercised with capricious and unrelenting severity.

The Brahminical system has indeed one tenet, which some have thought highly favourable to the

cultivation of universal benevolence. It admits of no converts. While it vigilantly guards against any innovation from foreign sources, it equally precludes any extension of itself. One great source of religious discord, that of controlling the opinions of other nations, is therefore necessarily removed.

It may justly however be questioned whether this absolute prohibition of all intercourse with the professors of other forms of religion, and the indifference to their tenets resulting from this prohibition, can properly be honoured with the praise of liberality. Liberality consists in yielding to the errors and infirmities of others however repugnant they may be to our own conviction or interest, but to yield, when forbearance is not opposite to our inclinations, as it calls for neither exertion nor self-denial, can never be accounted a virtue. A form of religion founded on this principle of exclusion, absolutely precludes the exercise of some of the noblest sentiments of our nature.

Toleration and forbearance arising from true liberality, may be considered under two different points of view. First, with respect to diversity of sentiment among those who profess the *same* faith; secondly with respect to the professors of *different modes* of faith.

It will be the object of this discourse to shew, in what manner the Brahminical system operates in promoting benevolence among themselves: in what manner it tends to cement and strengthen that peculiar structure of society which Brahminism has established.

On a former occasion it was shewn, that the arbitrary division of society into distinct castes among the Hindoos, had a powerful influence in contracting the intellectual faculties; but it yet remains to shew how far this division operates in contracting the social affections. In the one case, its pernicious effects, have been increased, by the corruptions introduced into the institution, during a long course of time; in the other case, its effects must have been immediate and irresistible. The mental powers ductile in their nature, elastic in their force, will sometimes surmount every tie which the pressure of civil institutions has formed to prevent their free exercise and expansion. But the affections of the heart, when once chilled by a cold and unfeeling superstition, remain in that inertion, which no power can call into action.

Were we indeed to judge of the Brahminical system from the precepts of benevolence which

it contains, there would be sufficient cause for admiration. Although an insurmountable barrier has been placed between the diffe rent orders of society; yet "God" says the sacred Véda, "having created the four classes, had not yet completed his work; but in addition to it, lest the royal and military class should become insurmountable on account of their power and ferocity, he produced the transcendant body of law; since law is the King of Kings, far more powerful and rigid than they. Nothing can be mightier than Law, by whose aid, as by that of the highest monarch, the weak prevail over the strong."*

To this sentence it is impossible to deny the praise of sublimity, as well of the most inflexible justice; but nugatory are such professions in an institution, which is founded on oppression. In those countries, where a purer religion has introduced a more liberal spirit of government, the gradations between the different orders of society, however distant, are not impassable. Hence, as the lowest are animated by hope, and incited to exertion, so there is a powerful restraint on despotism in the highest. The ties which bind society are then equal in their pressure, and the laws impartial in their application.

* Colebrooke, Digest of Hindoo Law.

But, in a country, where the superior orders have repressed every hope, and precluded even the possibility of advancement in those below them, where indolence may be indulged without any call to activity, and where tyranny may be exercised without fear of resistance, it is impossible that there should not be on the one hand, capricious rigor, and on the other hand ignorance and servility. Though such a variety of opinion on religious subjects is prevalent throughout Hindoostan, and though even the Brahminical hierarchy itself is, at the present time, nothing more than an oligarchical form of government, yet its power is not less arbitrary because its operations are desultory and partial. Its influence is felt in a greater or less degree throughout India; and wherever it is felt, it is converted into an instrument of evading just demands, or of enforcing immoderate exactions.

Nor let it be supposed, that the Brahminical system has repressed all religious animosity, towards those who are not subjected to its authority. The Brahmins are said to speak of the followers of Boodh "with all the malignity of an intolerant spirit." If the government of India established under the Brahminical priesthood, were at the present time, subsisting in its ancient vigor, we

should behold it not less domineering in its external deportment, than severe in its internal economy.

Thus far we have taken a view of the institutions of Brahminism, as they tend to expand and refine the social affections, in the different orders of society AMONG THEMSELVES; it yet remains to shew, in what manner they operate in their intercourse with OTHER NATIONS; how far they promote a disposition of universal benevolence.

It has been said that the principle of exclusion, which is a fundamental tenet in the Brahminical religion, has not contracted their beneficence or limited their philanthrophy. Kindness to strangers is a leading maxim of their faith, and enjoined in the strongest terms. "Fire is the superior of the Brahmins, the Brahmin is the superior of the tribes, the husband is the superior of women, but the stranger is the superior of all."[1]

But that these precepts can have any considerable efficacy, in counteracting that unsocial spirit which characterises their other institutions, may reasonably be doubted. Their religion has in-

[1] Heetopades.

spired them with vast and unbounded ideas of their own superiority over the rest of mankind, ideas, which can never be entertained, consistently with the genuine spirit of benevolence. They have always encouraged that contempt for the persons and opinions of other nations, which is always found to exist among men unused to a general intercourse with the world. The same fancied pre-eminence, which the Greek once assumed over foreigners, from his attainments in science or his achievements in the field, the Hindoo claims from his religion. What, in the former, was founded on some reasonable pretensions, and might impel him to maintain the superiority of which he boasted, has proved, among the Hindoos an empty vaunt, which can raise no emotion in others, but pity or contempt. "Nothing is more contemptible than a Yaván," was a sentiment common among them; a term of degradation, which they have applied to designate, first, their Grecian, and afterwards, their Mohammedan conquerors. A Hindoo, though oppressed by the sharpest penury, with scarcely sufficient to supply the cravings of hunger, when he makes his scanty meal, draws a circle round him, which he would think polluted, if the greatest potentate on earth should presume to enter.

The religious system then of the Brahmins, considered as it affects those who are subjected to its authority, is, in the highest degree, intolerant; as it regards the inhabitants of other countries, and the professors of other religions, it is repulsive and unsocial. In its internal economy, it possesses all the properties of Inquisitorial tyranny, though its power is not concentrated, nor its operations directed, by a common head; in its external deportment, it assumes the contracted spirit of Judaism, though not like that, softened by the liberal views of its prophetic writings, which proclaim universal acceptance to all the nations of the earth. Like the Jewish law, while the Brahminical religion has restricted the intercourse of its professors with the inhabitants of all other countries, it has superadded to the reserve of its cautionary restrictions, personal abhorrence and contempt.

It may indeed be doubted whether the unqualified praise of benevolence, which some Europeans are eager to claim for the Hindoo character, may not be attributed to the absolute submission, which the native of Hindoostan pays to his conqueror, from a motive of fear. But there is an essential difference between the passive acquiescence arising from indolence or terror, and

that disinterested forbearance which compassionates while it condemns; which, though it discriminates between the merit of individuals, yet never insists on that merit, as a preliminary to its beneficence.

But since this indifference to the speculative opinions of others, has been represented as constituting one of the most amiable features in the Hindoo religion, and has been insidiously contrasted with the active zeal for proselytism, which distinguishes Christianity; it may not be improper to discuss the question, how far this desire of extending itself, detracts from the beneficial tendency of the Gospel; or whether it be not rather an indication of its divine origin, and have not been of considerable effect, in promoting the happiness of mankind.

If the Christian religion had confined its benefits to any particular nation, or to any particular description of men; if it had formed an insurmountable barrier of exclusion to the greater part of mankind; if it had indiscriminately condemned all who were thus involuntarily excluded; it might in some degree have deserved those accusations of intolerance, with which it has been sometimes stigmatized by its enemies. If it had prohibited

its professors from extending its doctrines; if it had consigned to eternal misery all who were ignorant of them, it might have engendered arrogance and cruelty. But Christianity is not founded on such principles. Even that doctrine which has been assailed with the greatest virulence, the doctrine of the atonement, is, in its practical effects, calculated to produce sentiments of the most unbounded philanthropy. It teaches that the benefits of this sacrifice are unlimitted in their efficacy; that they have a retrospective influence in sanctifying the virtues of those who saw the promises afar off; and that they have an influence in sanctifying the virtues of those who were never acquainted with the conditions of the Christian covenant. If any superior priveleges are annexed to the knowledge of the Gospel of Christ, they are conferred on a condition of obedience to the evangelical declaration; "to whom much is given, of him shall be much required:" and among the most important of the duties which are thus imposed, is the communication of divine truth by every rational method.

When indeed Christianity claims to itself the title of being the only true revelation of the will of God, of being "the way, the truth, and the life," it claims no more than every religion

must assume which pretends to be of divine origin. The idea that the Supreme Being is pleased with a variety of religions, and with different modes of worship, is a supposition willingly entertained by the votary of superstition, because it affords a palliation for those errors which he is unable to defend. This supposition is also warmly applauded and insidiously defended by the infidel, because it amounts to a tacit confession, that all pretensions to revelation rest on the same uncertain basis. But the notion is, perhaps, of all others, the most irreconcileable to the attributes of God; it is the most destructive of sound morality. It would not only level all distinctions between truth and error, but would justify every crime committed under the mask of sanctity.

If an impartial estimate be formed concerning the effects, which have resulted from that desire of extension inseparable from a true faith in the promises of the Gospel, they will be found in a high degree beneficial. It has been justly remarked, that "it is well for the inhabitants of Hindoostan, that they did not fall under the dominion of Europeans at an earlier period, before the influence of knowledge and philosophy had dispelled the gloomy bigotry of the western

world, and rendered it less incapable of forbearance to opposite opinions."* There can be no doubt, that, under the pretence of disseminating Christianity, the greatest enormities have been committed, and the most unjustifiable methods have been adopted.

It may be justly questioned however, whether a wish of conversion has been the true cause of these atrocities. The love of national aggrandisement, or of private interest, has proved a fertile source of calamity, as well since the introduction of Christianity, as before; and this passion has often disguised itself under a zeal for religion. But Christianity is not chargeable with these evils, nor can they be justly imputed to the desire of extending the Christian faith. On the contrary, not only are such methods of propagation in direct opposition to the precepts of the Gospel, but these precepts have operated sensibly, in checking this intolerant spirit, even in the worst of times. The atrocious cruelties inflicted by Spain on the inhabitants of the New World, are never recalled to our recollection, unaccompanied by the thought that they were nobly resisted, and eloquently exposed, by the piety of a Christian

* Dr. Tennant.

missionary.[a] In modern times, since the principles of Christianity have been better understood, the tendency of this disposition in its professors to diffuse its doctrines, has been less equivocally displayed. Though an unfeeling stoicism has attempted to deride its efforts as visionary, and though enthusiasm has often afforded occasion for the ridicule of affected prudence; yet the propagation of the Gospel has not only diffused the blessings of civilization, but has essentially distinguished the colonial policy of modern nations from that of ancient times. Where in the history of Athens or of Rome, shall we look for any tenderness or solicitude, respecting the welfare of provincial settlements? They were regarded merely as instruments to facilitate schemes of conquest or of plunder; the power of the parent state was frequently exerted to restrict, but seldom to protect or to foster. How could anxiety for the melioration of the moral character, be consistent with that destitution of fixed principles which amalgamated all religious opinions? Such a wish can never be formed, such a plan can never be rationally executed, but on the basis of Christianity; which with inflexible strictness inculcates that there is but "one faith," but with genuine benevolence

[a] Les Casas.

teaches that "God hath made of one blood all nations, for to dwell on all the face of the earth."

It would be pursuing the subject too far, to enter into a discussion of those other defects in the Brahminical system, which contract benevolence, and weaken the foundations of all moral obligation. It should however be mentioned, that this system inculcates the pernicious doctrine that it is presumption in the lower orders, to attempt the performance of those virtues, which exclusively belong to the higher; a tenet which strikes at the very existence of society. This religion also permits the practice of some present evil, for the purpose of obtaining a remote good; and it proceeds on that principle, inseparable from all false religions, that the exact performance of external ordinances is a sufficient compensation for the neglect of moral duties.

A survey of the various evils resulting from a code of morality so defective and unsound, extorted, from a writer, who cannot be accused of bigotry, the following animated eulogy.

"Christianity vindicates all its glories, all its honors, and all its reverence, when we behold the most horrid impieties committed amongst the

nations on whom its influence does not shine, as actions necessary in the common conduct of life; I mean poisoning, treachery, and assassination, among the sons of ambition; rapine, cruelty, and extortion, among the ministers of justice. I leave to divines, by more sanctified reflections, to vindicate the cause of their religion and their God."[1]

This vindication has been attempted in the preceding discourses; and whatever may be their imperfections in many other respects, let it not be said, in depreciation of any arguments which have been offered, that the representation of the Brahminical system has been drawn with a partial hand; that its disagreeable features have been invidiously protuded; that the deformities inherent in it, are nothing more than deviations from its original perfection; and that the breath of vulgar superstition has sullied an otherwise beautiful theory of morals. The effects on the moral character, which have been here pointed out, are the natural and necessary consequences of the Brahminical creed; some of these deflections from the sound principles of morality, are expressly enjoined in the Hindoo code; others are

[1] Orme.

tacitly allowed; and all of them are in perfect conformity with the genuine spirit of the Hindoo religion.

To those who are inclined to entertain a high opinion of Indian morality, and of the Indian character, but who are nevertheless willing to admit the indisputable truth, that the national character is determined by the national religion, and that national prosperity is inseparably connected with national virtue, a short, but, satisfactory, answer may be given. If there be any man, who has passed the early period of his life in an Asiatic climate, and particularly in India, who from a few solitary instances, has formed a judgment of the Asiatic character, and who re-visits his native shores enamoured of Asiatic government, and of Asiatic superstition; to such a man, it may be fearlessly replied, that he has returned with his discovery too late; that the whole course of Oriental history is against him; and that history furnishes a more certain criterion of manners and morals, than any specious opinions, derived from partial and prejudiced observation.

The pathetic invocation which the Florentine Secretary once uttered in behalf of Italy, would

be strictly applicable to India, if a native of India were capable of feeling the depressed condition of his country.

"If," says this able politician, "for the manifestation of the courage of Moses, it was necessary that the Israelites should be captives in Egypt; for discovery of the magnanimity of Cyrus, that the Persians should be oppressed by the Medes; and for the illustration of the excellence of Theseus, that the Athenians should be banished and dispersed; so to demonstrate and evince the necessity of an Italian spirit, it was necessary that Italy should be reduced to its present condition; that it should be in greater bondage than the Jews; in greater servitude than the Persians; and in greater dispersion than the Athenians; without a head, without order, harrassed, spoiled, overcome, overrun, and overwhelmed with all kind of calamity."[k]

No words can convey a more faithful description of India, not only of its present state, but of its past condition; and this description will tend to counteract the unjust insinuations, which have been urged against the conduct of European

[k] Machiavelli, Il. Princip. c. 26.

nations in the East. They have been accused of introducing into the territories subject to their empire, those evils which they found there: they have been accused of fostering those seeds of anarchy, which are the spontaneous production of the soil. But European conquest, far from aggravating, has tended to mitigate the calamities of India; and it is a pleasing consolation to reflect, that the period will arrive, though slowly yet necessarily will arrive, when it will be seen how much she is indebted to the enterprising spirit of the nations of the West. The time will arrive when the rays of intellectual light, which we have so long enjoyed, though late in their approach, shall again visit the Eastern world.

> Nos primus equis oriens afflavit anhelis,
> Illic sera rubens accendit lumina vesper.[t]

To hasten this happy æra must be the wish of every heart actuated by Christian benevolence. But the duty of communicating instruction of any kind, as it must be prosecuted by human means, must be undertaken in that manner, which according to probable calculation, will be attended with success. This duty is binding, only where such a

[t] Virgil Georg. Lib. 1, v. 250.

prospect is afforded; and on this account, every effort should be directed, with an ardor proportionable to the wants and the wishes of those, whom we propose to instruct, as well as to our own powers and opportunities of communicating instruction.

Thus, if the case be stated concerning the difference between the Africans and the Asiatics, it must be concluded, that, with respect to the, former, the duty is positive. No description of men are more versatile in disposition than the Africans; in no instance do the necessities of the people more loudly call for the intervention of some benevolent hand, to rescue them from ignorance, and the miseries attendant on ignorance; in no instance can it be more imperiously demanded as a debt of justice, in order to atone for the calamities inflicted by avarice and cupidity on that unhappy quarter of the Globe.

With respect to the Asiatics, and particularly the professors of the Brahminical faith, the case is different. Of their inflexible adherence to the religious opinions of their ancestor, sufficient evidences have been adduced in the preceding discourses; of their moral wants it has been truly observed, that if they are not the most enlightened

they are the most refined people that ever existed in the world; of their disposition to embrace the Christian faith it cannot be denied, that all attempts to introduce it into India, have been either fruitless, or attended with faint hopes of success.

This however is a field of enquiry which has been already pre-occupied: but is still ample in its limits; for on every question which becomes a subject of general discussion, if it be difficult to produce novelty, it is equally difficult to preserve silence. Besides, silence is always suspected, and is imputed either to ignorance, to indecision, or to timidity. If therefore a future discourse shall be devoted to the consideration of the practicability of converting the natives of Hindoostan to the truths of Christianity, and of the probable success of those methods, which have been hitherto employed to accomplish that important end; whatever difference of opinion may be found in it, from some of those which have been offered to the world, that difference, it is hoped, will be received with candor; nor can the attempt itself be attributed to any other motive, than to an honest desire of being useful.

DISCOURSE IX.

ON THE PRACTICABILITY OF INTRODUCING CHRISTIANITY INTO INDIA.

Faithful to the original design, the present discourse, though intended to discuss the expediency and practicability of propagating the Gospel among our Indian subjects, (and the attempt can be expedient only, as far as it is rationally practicable) will chiefly refer to the religious wants of those, who have higher claims on our benevolence, and among whom our benevolence may be more effectually, and more usefully exerted.

If it be necessary to insist on the propriety of this conduct, or if it be necessary to adduce any authority, in order to prove its propriety, we have the sanction of the Apostolical precept contained in the text; we have the sanction of experience to convince us, that by aiming at objects above human power or wisdom to accomplish, we often lose sight of those, which are within our reach; and that the most comprehensive designs must be executed by slow and gradual advances.

However we may have reason to lament the disappointment, which the missionaries of modern times have experienced in the work of conversion, yet their want of success affords an argument in favor of our religion, which cannot be too fre-

quently repeated; because the evidence, which it gives of the divine interposition in the original propagation of Christianity, is irresistible. It possesses indeed almost all the properties of a sensible miracle. That the Christian religion is now established, must be admitted as an indisputable fact; but, that if it were at first established, merely by the operation of human causes, the same causes, and others added to them still more cogent, should now fail of producing the same effects, is a phænomenon irreconcileable to the ordinary course of events; and can be accounted for only, on the supposition of some superior agency.

It has been the practice of many writers, not only of unbelievers, but of Christians, to invalidate the force of this argument; and, in stating the difficulties which oppose the present propagation of the Gospel, and particularly its propagation in India, they have compared them with the impediments which the first preachers of the Gospel were compelled to encounter; and have represented the situation of India to be far more unfavourable to the introduction of a new system of faith, than the general state of the world was, in the time of the Apostles.

But this insinuation is founded on any thing, rather than on a knowledge of historical facts, or an acquaintance with human nature. The first preachers of the Gospel had to contend with a spirit of general indifference and infidelity in matters of religion, a temper of mind the most unpromising for the reception of new tenets, and especially of such as they taught. The modern missionaries have to contend with rivetted and rigid superstition, an obstacle certainly formidable, but far less insurmountable than general and confirmed scepticism. On the contrary, a mind enthralled by superstition, may often be led to espouse new opinions; for as superstition implies a disposition to contemplate religious subjects, and to be swayed by religious terrors, the objects may be changed, while the disposition remains the same.

But, without enquiring minutely into the precise difference between those two opposite dispositions, it may be answered, that while modern missionaries have failed in their attempts on either, the first preachers of the Gospel were equally successful against both. They could penetrate the recesses, they could reveal the licentious mysteries of the Druidical groves, and expose them to public indignation, as well

as silence the arrogance and the sophistry of the schools.

If ever indeed a satisfactory answer were given to that historian, who has digressed from his principal subject, to trace the establishment of Christianity; and if a decisive proof be wanted, to shew the insufficiency of those causes, which he has assigned for the overthrow of the Pagan Colossus, and for the erection of the banner of the Cross in its place; this proof may be found in the history of the missionaries of the Romish Church to the eastern world. We may there see all those causes operating together, and operating ineffectually.

If intolerant zeal, but a zeal which desired the enlargement of its own opinions, were an adequate cause for the first success of the Christian faith: where has that quality been more conspicuously displayed, than in the Church of Rome? If the immortality of the soul were a sufficient cause, that doctrine has been taught by the Romish Church, in a manner as likely to command success, as when taught by the first Apostles; for who have been so eager to hurl forth threats of everlasting punishment against those, who disregard its admonitions, and disown its autho-

rity, or to promise exclusive salvation to those, who come within its sanctuary? If the miraculous powers of the first preachers of the Gospel were the cause of its success, powers, of which the historian insinuates, that they were only assumed: who have dealt in mystery and miracle, in their attempts at proselytism, so much as the Romanists? If the virtues of the primitive Christians were so effectual towards the conversion of the Pagan world, but which virtues are represented as consisting in unnecessary mortification, in abstinence from the innocent enjoyments of nature, in abstraction from the world, in a disregard and contempt for the duties of social life: where have those qualities been more conspicuously visible, than in the followers of the Church of Rome? Lastly, if Unity in the government of the Church, could once prove so effectual in extending its limits: what Church was ever so strongly organized, so systematic in all its operations, so careful to preserve uniformity of sentiment, and to prevent defection from its ordinances, as the Church of Rome? But we have seen, that all these causes have been insufficient to make any lasting impression on Oriental superstition. The proselytes, which have been made, have been chiefly nominal; gained at first by undue compliances, and either preserved by the same artifices, or permitted to relapse into their former errors.

Should an objection here arise, that the state of the eastern world is widely different from the state of the Roman empire at the first propagation of Christianity; and that to this circumstance may be imputed the failure of modern missionaries: it may be replied, that there are causes, whose potency is irresistible, and whose efficacy is universal, which have contributed towards the conversion of the idolatrous inhabitants of India. It is not the Church of Rome solely, which has directed her efforts towards the subversion of Oriental Paganism; the task has been attempted not by one sect of Christians, or by one nation, but by sects widely discordant in opinion, and by nations eminently differing in character. The experiment has been tried by men of warm passions and weak judgment, and by men whose learning and piety have adorned their native countries; but which they have voluntarily relinquished for the noble purpose of disseminating that faith, the consolations of which they themselves so powerfully felt. The object has not been hastily espoused, and then so suddenly forgotten; but has been tried, during the space of three centuries, sometimes more languidly, sometimes more vigorously, but never entirely given up or kept out of view.

While however the faith of the believer in the miraculous establishment of his religion, is strongly confirmed by the disappointment in the attempts of those, who have been destitute of this supernatural assistance; his benevolence is sometimes led to lament the failure of these labors of love. For, on a candid review of the progress of the Gospel in the East during these latter ages, his mind is irresistibly led to adopt one of these two conclusions; either that the design of introducing Christianity among the natives of India, is, by any human means, totally impracticable, and that all future attempts will be attended with similar consequences to those, which have been already made; or that, although so many different plans have been projected and executed, there may be some other, as yet untried, which would probably be attended with success. Or thirdly, might not a rational and benevolent mind, shrinking from the hard necessity of assenting to either of the two former conclusions in a rigid and unqualified sense, recommend a line of conduct drawn from a partial admission of both? Might it not infer, that the undertaking is surrounded by difficulties, which should repress any too sanguine expectations of their removal; but that, if any other mode may hereafter be pointed out both safe and practicable, it should be adopted, though its success be uncertain.

That among all the plans, which may be formed, after so many have been already defeated, there should be any so totally different from the preceding, as to promise immediate efficacy, is highly improbable; and therefore we must at length be compelled to acquiese in this opinion, that the undertaking is opposed by obstacles, which it is extremely difficult to remove, and which at this distance, it is perhaps impossible for us entirely to comprehend.

In this situation, and under these disadvantages, it is natural to enquire, whether through this eager desire of accomplishing an object, which, however worthy of pursuit, seems to be at an immense distance; another object of equal importance, an object easy in its attainment, and which if attained, might ultimately, though remotely, lead to the event so ardently wished, has not been neglected.

The first proposition then, which may be safely laid down on the subject, is the following: that the conversion of the Hindoos should be the object of our second care; that it should be our first concern, as it is our most solemn and indispensable duty, to provide for the communication of religious instruction, and for the preservation

of religious knowledge, among our own countrymen resident in India.

In the midst of all the zeal, which has been displayed for the subversion of idolatry, it may be justly retorted on us, that the moral and religious wants of our numerous fellow subjects in our own eastern settlements, have been seldom brought under contemplation. It may also be urged with no little force, that any schemes for diffusing the Christian faith, are not likely to be conducted with prudence by those, who have shewn an unwarrantable neglect of a plain and unequivocal duty. Is it policy to aim at the correction of the moral depravity of the Hindoos, while we leave our British youth to the contagion of evil example, and to the enervating influence of an eastern climate, without making scarcely an effort to fortify their minds by religious impressions? Is it consistency to propose the introduction of a pure system of doctrines, of which our own practice shews, that we entirely disregard their utility and efficacy; while the native of Hindoostan, in speaking of the religious faith of his British conqueror, designates him by the appellation of "the Infidel"? Is it wisdom, to expend vast sums on an object, which some will call visionary, and all must allow to be of doubtful attainment, while we omit

every opportunity of effecting, what no one who is alive to the happiness of mankind, but will acknowlege to be safe and salutary; which, if wisely conducted, cannot be attended with hazard, and must be productive of certain benefit? Is it benevolence, benevolence which can be justified on any rational principle, to shew a more lively regard for the welfare of those, whose connection with us originated, and will be determined by commercial interest, than for those who are united to us by every tie, which can endear man to man; who are connected either by interest, consanguinity or friendship with almost every individual in the British empire? These suggestions might be enlarged on with effect; they might be urged with greater force; but to insinuate them however lightly, is sufficient for every purpose of conviction.

Though for several considerations of importance, which will readily occur, but which it would be foreign to the present purpose to specify, it might be impolitic to hold out inducements to the great mass of the British population in India, which might bind them too strongly to the interests of that country, & consequently weaken their attachment to their native land; yet any motives, which might induce a body of pious and regular Clergy

to settle there; any advantages, which while they might be sufficient to satisfy the virtuous love of independence, would not be strong enough to gratify the dreams of avarice, might perhaps be proposed with success, and certainly could be liable to no well-founded objection. That such a measure, would effectually tend to raise the standard of morals, which a disuse of the means of religious instruction would necessarily relax, would be a benefit so obvious, that to enlarge on it, would weaken its force. There are other and subordinate advantages deserving of notice, but which might ultimately prove of incalculable utility.

A Clergy of this description in the opportunities of leisure, which their situation would afford, might be profitably employed in exploring those recondite sources of Oriental literature, which might both enlarge the stock of general knowledge, and add new confirmation to the truths of revealed religion. That so much has hitherto been effected by our countrymen, amid the incessant occupations of active life, will fully repel the illiberal and unjust insinuation, that their whole attention has been absorbed in the acquisition of wealth, or directed to objects of unlawful ambition; but what might not be expected from a body of men, whose profession is so intimately

connected with literature, and whose disposition would naturally prompt them to cultivate those branches of knowledge, which would be generally useful to the public, as well as peculiarly interesting to the religious world.

To this advantage may be added another of still greater weight. Such a measure would effectually remove an objection, which has been urged against the plan of educating the British youth in India. Whatever difference of opinion may be entertained in a general point of view, concerning the comparative advantages of a domestic, or of a foreign education, for those natives of Britain, who are employed in our eastern settlements; certain it is, that a numerous body of them cannot be educated at home. Adequate means of instruction must therefore be devised for those who are born in India, and who are destined to be employed in the service of that country. It has however been said, that the general state of learning is there at so low an ebb, that whatever superior advantages may be attained by an Indian education, with respect to the acquisition of the native languages, yet they are more than counterbalanced by the difficulty of acquiring the elements of general knowledge.*

* Dr. Tennant.

The establishment of a regular Clergy, equal to the wants of the British population, would at once remove this obstacle. The progress in the Oriental languages, which their situation would enable them to make, joined with their superior proficiency in general knowledge, would eminently qualify them for the task of education, in India as well as in Europe; and among the variety of opinions, which prevail on other questions, it seems established by tacit consent and by universal custom, that this important duty cannot be confided to better, or more able hands.

But it may here be enquired, whether all the schemes, which have been projected with so much benevolence, for the conversion and moral improvement of the Hindoos, are to be indiscriminately condemned? Are they to be at once given up, merely for the purpose of introducing an ecclesiastical establishment? This is by no means intended.

But here it will be proper to lay down a second proposition: that no scheme for the conversion of the Hindoos, can be safely prosecuted, unless under the superintendance of a British ecclesiastical establishment.

There is one obstacle of great magnitude, in the way of any attempt towards the conversion of the Hindoos to Christianity, but which is seldom noticed as such; which is, that the majority of the British population in India, are adverse to the measure. This fact is not only indisputable in itself; but it is a fact, which men of different opinions are forward to proclaim. The most zealous propagandists acknowledge it, and hastily, or even ungenerously, impute it to religious infidelity, or at best to indifference. Their opponents equally acknowledge it, and bring it forward as a decisive argument against the propriety, the policy, and the practicability of the measure. But it is mentioned, in this place, with neither of these views. It is mentioned to shew, that whatever be the cause, the result will be precisely the same.

While this opposition continues, all hopes of success, in the ordinary course of events, are absolutely chimerical. To suppose that any society, or joint societies in this kingdom, can carry into execution a work of such magnitude and difficulty, not only without the co-operation, but in direct contradiction to the decided opinion of so powerful an interest, is an idea which may perhaps be entertained by heated zeal, but can never stand the test of dispassionate judgment. Will not the

Brahmin, already sufficiently attached to his own prejudices, be more strongly confirmed in them, when he perceives, that although a few solitary individuals are eager to oppose them, they are regarded with complacency and even with respect, by characters of the highest estimation and authority? If there be no active opposition, yet a coldness and disgust will be shewn to the agents in the measure, which will be readily perceived by the Hindoo, who will not fail to convert them to his own advantage.

By the adoption of the expedient proposed, by providing an ecclesiastical establishment for our fellow subjects, this opposition to the conversion of the Hindoos would not perhaps be destroyed; but we should then be enabled to ascertain on what grounds this opposition was founded. If scepticism, and a general indifference to all religion, be so prevalent in the East, this would be the most likely method to subdue their predominance. Infidelity, we well know, more frequently proceeds from inconsideration, from want of attention to serious concerns, than from any other cause; nor can it be a matter of surprise, that an aversion from religion should prevail, where the opportunities of receiving any religious impressions are so rare,

as sometimes not to occur once in the course of a whole life. By an establishment of the institutions of a protestant episcopal Church, these sceptical opinions would be considerably diminished. Any opposition to the dissemination of Christianity among the Hindoos, would then no longer proceed from concealed hostility, or avowed unbelief; and if the same opinion concerning the propriety and practicability of the attempt, should then be retained, that opinion could only be assigned to a rational conviction of its danger.

In the course of the various speculations, which have been hazarded on this interesting subject, a debate has frequently arisen, whether our purpose may be more effectually promoted, by the quiet dispersion of our Scriptures, or by the more active labors of Christian missionaries. The almost total failure, which the missionaries, either of former or of the present times, have experienced, would clearly point out the necessity of adopting some other method. The design of supplying the Hindoos with a version of the whole, or of part of our Scriptures, in their different languages, has been thought to unite every advantage. This may at length awaken their indolence, and stimulate their curiosity; and may solicit their attention, without alarming their prejudices.

That such a plan, if pursued under proper restrictions would be harmless, no doubt has been entertained; of its success it is impossible to hazard more than a probable conjecture. But the necessity of a regular Clergy, to carry even this measure into execution, is not less apparent. They could judge more accurately than we can pretend to determine, concerning the number of dialects, into which the proposed versions should be made; and what parts, it might be most proper to submit successively to consideration.

To judge of the precise periods, which are proper to pursue this task; to know when to raise, and when to remit exertion; to understand what parts will operate most forcibly on different minds, or on the same mind under different circumstances; these will require a long and intimate acquaintance with the manners of the inhabitants, as well as a nice discernment and general knowledge of the motives, which prompt the human heart: but this knowledge is absolutely necessary. An indiscriminate circulation of our translations will defeat every salutary effect, which a judicious dispersion of them might in time produce: they will either become the sport of the winds, or fan the flames of jealousy and sedition.

The necessity of forming a British ecclesiastical establishment in India will be still more evident, if we consider it as an instrument, capable of counteracting the misguided and pernicious efforts of other religious sects, to alienate the affections of the natives from our goverment. I speak not only of unauthorized missionaries among ourselves, but of the emissaries of our enemies, under the mask of religion. If the probable subjugation of Brahminism, at some distant period, were the only benefit to be contemplated from the establishment of an episcopal Church, that probability itself might be the principal point to be discussed: but there are advantages unequivocal and immediate, to be expected. Among the vast variety of sects prevalent through Hindoostan, many of the natives, are entirely out of the pale of the Brahminical faith; and there are numbers, the offspring of Europeans and Asiatics, who are insurmountably excluded from all participation in the religious institutions of their country. These compose a body, already powerful, and which may hereafter become formidable. Among these, the labors of a Protestant Clergy might be advantageously and effectually exerted. It is well known that in one presidency alone,[a] there are more than four hundred thousand

[a] Fort St. George.

French Papists, all active in disseminating their religion, and together with their religious tenets, their political principles. If an agreement in external ceremonies, be a ground of union in matters of faith, many of the Hindoos would be more likely to be converted by the Church of Rome, than by any other Church. Nor is this a vague surmise. The venerable Swartz was heard to lament, that many of his Indian converts, disgusted at the simplicity of his mode of worship, embraced an early opportunity of going over to the Romish Communion; allured and congenially gratified by the pageantry and splendor of its ordinances. While our enemies, and while the dissenters from our establishment, are thus unwearied in their exertions, it is not for us to be indifferent. If England had long since planted a Church in her Indian possessions, that Church would now have formed the strongest bulwark of her power; would have preserved the Hindoos from being irritated by the goad of fanaticism; and would have preserved thousands of British subjects from the worst of evils, infidelity.

The third proposition which may be laid down on this subject is, that no attempts at converting the Hindoos can be safely prosecuted, unless, under a conviction, that their efficacy will be slow.

This is not a proposition which demands only a cold assent; it should regulate every movement. It is not stated with a view to repress any well directed activity; but to prevent that relaxation of activity, which always follows the disappointment or delay of visionary expectation. If any man can be led to imagine, that an edifice, which has resisted the impetuous attacks of Mohammedan bigotry, and the undermining approaches of Jesuitical craft, is to be suddenly or speedily razed to the ground; his benevolence must be praised at the expence of his discretion. We may on this occasion learn a useful lesson from our enemies. "Let Christianity," said the infidel rulers of France, when they restored at least the nominal profession of it, "descend slowly and silently to the tomb: it is not possible at once, or by violent measures, to extirpate the religion of eighteen centuries." They were perfectly right. They were right according to what they conceived the Christian Religion to be, and what the Brahminical system really is, a structure firmly cemented by interest on the one hand, and by terror on the other.

It is not possible, we may also say on the present occasion, at once, or easily to subdue a religious system, which we know to have subsisted

under nearly the same form, more than three thousand years. Whatever progress can be made in the work, must be made by gradations almost imperceptible: and let us not rudely attempt to force an effect, which, if ever produced at all, must be matured by the utmost delicacy, patience, and discrimination. The Hindoos are already, in some degree, influenced by the prevalence of European customs, in the ordinary commerce of life: they already own the salutary effects of British legislation; many of their cruel and pernicious rites, springing out of their superstition, have been restrained by the timely interference of British power; more may hereafter be gradually and gently abolished. But as for their religion, we may be assured, that it is the last thing which they will relinquish; that they will retain many of its outward ceremonies and positive institutions, when their utility shall be no longer acknowledged, and when their significancy shall be no longer understood.

In contemplating the causes, which oppose the conversion of the Hindoos to Christianity, there are some, which have been entirely disregarded; and others, which have been stated in a manner, diametrically opposite to truth.

In the first place, we have heard it asserted,

that there is a manifest analogy between some fundamental tenets of the Christian faith, and the leading doctrines of Brahminism. The doctrines of the Trinity, of the Incarnation, and of the Atonement, have been particularly specified; and a conclusion has thence been drawn, that this resemblance between the two systems, will predispose the minds of the Hindoos, towards the reception of Christianity; that far from revolting at its mysteries, many are already familiar to them.

Without pausing a moment to enquire into the nature of this resemblance, we may contend, that this circumstance, will perhaps have no weight, or if it should have any weight, will, instead of a facility, prove an impediment.

That a similarity of opinion in leading articles, forms a basis of union in matters of religion, is a very disputable position, when we reflect on the almost infinite variety of Christian sects, and on the slight causes, which have led to their separation But the Hindoo has no objection to allow the divine authority of the Christian religion: he entertains a respect for every religion. The nearer then that Christianity can be made to approach towards Brahminism, the more strongly will he be confirmed in his favorite idea, that " heaven is a

palace, to which there are many avenues"; and the less reason will he see for relinquishing the faith of his ancestors.

Another cause stated, as tending to facilitate the conversion of the Hindoos, is the flexibility of their character. That this flexibility extends to points connected with their sacred institutions, has never been proved; on the contrary, rigid adherence to their ancient superstition, was always understood to be their national characteristic; until, among other novelties, this fact, sanctioned by the experience of ages, has lately been represented as unfounded, and in practice has been completely set at defiance. That the intemperate zeal of our fanatical missionaries, has excited the apprehensions of the Brahminical order, is abundantly proved from their own letters and journals. It cannot indeed be denied, that the most absurd and ludicrous passages have been selected from these singular productions, for the purpose of exposing their authors to ridicule; but no man has ever presumed to contend, that these passages are forgeries. If their own statements be entitled to any credit, no farther argument need to be urged against either their competency to the task, or against this supposed pliability in the Indian character.

The real disposition of the Hindoos has indeed been little understood, and grossly misrepresented. Naturally passive and indolent, they may not always be roused to warmth, even in defence of their religion. They are known generally to avoid debate on the subject, and even apparently to acquiesce in the arguments of their opponents. When a late eastern despot requested his minister, in a tone amounting to a command, to embrace the faith of Mohammed, he received the answer of assent; "I am your slave." But the monarch well knew the danger which lurked under this seeming compliance, and the request was never repeated. Let this example warn us, not to calculate too far on the mildness of the Hindoo temper, when their prejudices are inflamed. The fire which is pent up burns the fiercest. Their vengeance may be secret, and may be tardy; but it will be certain, and it will be dreadful.

Having thus endeavoured to establish the three propositions which were originally laid down, I would willingly conclude, if it were not necessary to vindicate them from one objection, which has had great weight, even on pious minds. Holding the opinions which have been maintained in this discourse, not to speak plainly would imply cowardice, and what is worse than cowardice, would betray guilt.

I am not insensible to the charge which has been preferred against the Church of England, by a description of men who profess to be her warmest friends, that she is indifferent to the vital interests of religion, because she has not done with regard to Indian missions, what indeed she had not the power to do; what, if she had the power to do, she has acted most wisely in leaving undone; neither am I ignorant of the manner in which the motives of all those, who venture to adopt the line of argument pursued in this discourse, are perverted and vilified. They are stigmatized as anxious to perpetuate the reign of ignorance, to encourage slavery, and to check the progress of the Gospel of truth.

These arts, weak as they are ungenerous, are best answered by silence; but there is one objection frequently urged, deserving of notice, because carrying with it a semblance of piety. It is said, that the mode of reasoning now adopted, proceeds on a supposition, that the extension of the kingdom of Christ depends on the will of Princes, and on the policy of Statesmen; that it was originally established in opposition to human power, and in a manner directly opposite to that, which human wisdom would have suggested.

Popularity alone renders such arguments worthy of notice, for they need no refutation. Whatever might have been the instruments, which the Almighty Governor of the Universe was pleased to select, for the original propagation of his Divine Word; yet these instruments were powerful indeed, when wielded by the arm of Omnipotence. But the first establishment of Christianity, philosophical scepticism itself must allow to be an anomaly: religious piety will feel no hesitation in calling it a miracle. With this miracle however we have nothing farther to do, than to use it as a mean for the invigoration of our faith, not for the regulation of our practice. As far as we can pretend to judge, it appears to be the will of God, that the only expedients left to us for the propagation of his word, are the same prudence and foresight, which are requisite for the attainment of any other object. If then because the early preachers of the Gospel were destitute of human accomplishments, but were supported by supernatural assistance, we should, in the present time, select for the workmen devoid of learning, but who possess none of these extraordinary endowments; may we not justly expect that God will punish our presumption? If, because the Gospel itself was first preached, though not exclusively, yet peculiarly to the poor, we should

address ourselves entirely to the lower castes of the Hindoos, in defiance of the Brahminical order: may we not expect that a flame will be kindled, which we shall in vain endeavour to extinguish? Such a procedure is not only imprudence, but impiety; it is nothing less than to tempt God. But when we hear the language constantly echoed and re-echoed among those self-appointed teachers of Christianity, and observe their entire contempt of all the maxims of ordinary prudence, we must conclude either, that they believe themselves already to possess, or confidently expect to be favoured with, supernatural aid. Their attempts according to human calculation must be attended with defeat; success would be—I speak without a sarcasm—miraculous.

These reflections at any other period might appear irrelevant, because they would be undisputed; but the aspect of the present times will fully justify the propriety of their insertion.

Neither shall I appear unnecessarily to linger, if, from a wish to impress more strongly the arguments offered on the present occasion, I venture to fortify them under the authority of a character, dear to England; which, in his earlier years was adorned by his virtues and his talents,

endeared, in a peculiar manner, to this University, which he ever regarded with the warmest affection to the last moment of his valuable life; but esteemed almost sacred by India, where his eminent attainments and virtues were so usefully and so honourably displayed. His opinion on the question of Indian conversion, has often been set forward in the conspicuous light which it deserves; his expressions have been dilated and tortured, in order to make them speak a sense which they will not bear; but no unprejudiced mind can reflect on them, without perceiving his decided conviction, that the attempt was opposed by difficulties almost insuperable. Let it be observed, that this is not an hypothesis, which, however ingeniously defended by superior learning, an inferior mind might possibly subvert; but the deliberate opinion of an accurate observer of the human character, on a subject, wherein above any other, that knowledge is indispensable. It is also the opinion of a man, concerning whom it would be a cold commendation to say, that no considerations of secular prudence, no motives of contracted policy, could warp his judgment, and check his benevolence. Who could be more feelingly alive than he to the blessings of liberty? but he knew (to use his own words) that "the Asiatics must and will be

governed by absolute power." Who could be more forcibly impressed by the historical truth of the Christian Religion, and by the transcendant purity of Christian ethics? but he saw the difficulty of engrafting them on the sickly morality of the Hindoo. His useful labors may well be proposed for imitation in the direction of our's, as their success may prove a powerful incitement. In him we shall see the maxim studiously defended by men of moderate acquirements, that superior minds are unqualified for the active duties of life, completely refuted. In him we shall find, that the voice of the student, even in the retirement of his closet, will sometimes be heard amidst the din of camps, and will influence the deliberations of contending councils; and we may learn, that present applause and posthumous fame, the objects after which human ambition pants, may be obtained, without pursuing them through the field of blood, or the labyrinth of intrigue.

Let his example be followed by us in our attempts to improve the condition of our Indian subjects. Let the cautions and gradual propagation of truth be the rule of our conduct: the excellence of which rule, may be exemplified by the practice even of an inspired Apostle;

"I have fed you with milk and not with meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able."

The general conversion of the Hindoos appears, under present circumstances, at an immense distance. This is an event, which, although we have reason to suppose it may take place in the course of God's Providence, seems beyond the achievement of human wisdom. This is a day, which like the Patriarchs of old, we may behold afar off; but, like them, we can behold it only with the eye of faith. It must be reserved for future generations, to witness the happy period, when "the household of faith" shall comprise the universal offspring of that beneficent Parent" of whom the whole family in "heaven and earth is named," and be admitted to receive "the adoption and inheritance of the children of light."

Notes.

NOTES.

P. 12. l. 1. [*Their division into separate tribes and castes.*]—Both Arrian and Strabo have divided the Indians into *seven* classes or tribes. Φησι δη των Ινδων πληθος εις επτα μερη διηρησθαι, και πρωτους μεν τους Φιλοσοφους ειναι *Strabo.* l. 15. The ancient writers, in all probability, confounded some of the subdivisions with the four primary orders.

P. 12. l. 14. [*peculiar immunities arrogated by the sacerdotal order.*] Arrian gives a description of the ancient *Brachmanes*, which decidedly proves the long establishment of castes, and the anteriority of the Brahminical institution to the heterodox opinions of the *Baudhas* and *Iainas.* He mentions the *Brachmanes* as a distinct tribe, which, though inferior to the others in number, was superior in rank and estimation; that they were bound to no bodily work, nor contributed any thing from labor to the public use; in short, no duty was prescribed to that tribe, but the duty of sacrificing to the gods for the common benefit of the Indians; and when any one celebrated a private sacrifice, a person of that class became his guide, as if the sacrifice otherwise would not be acceptable to the gods. The pre-eminence of the sacerdotal order in the scale of dignity, above sovereigns or warriors, seems to have been of high antiquity. Plato, in his description of the passing of the soul into different bodies, gives the first honor to philosophy. The soul which has followed the immortals in the best manner, or has seen most of the nature of things, is ordered to animate a philosopher.—Την μεν πλησα ιδουσαν, εις γονην ανδρος γενησομενου Φιλοσοφου, η φιλοκαλου. Plato In Phædr.

P. 12. l. 20. [*Their total abborrence from idolatry.*] Both Porphyry and Strabo mention the metempsychosis, and the penances of the *Brachmanes;* but concerning their idolatrous worship, those writers of antiquity are entirely silent: Eusebius expressly states, that they worship no images. χιλιαδες πολλαι των λεγομενων Βραχμανων οιτινες κατα παραδοσιν των προγονων, και νομων, ουτε φονευουσιν, ουτε ξοανα σεβουσι. Euseb. Præp Evang. L. 6. c. 10.

P. 14. l. 9. [*the tradition which relates that his pious labors were extended to India.*] After the third century of the Christian æra, so universally was it acknowledged that St. Thomas had visited India, and preached the Gospel there, that the famous Manes, who gave himself out for a second Messiah, and chose his own Apostles, sent out one of them to India, named Thomas, in order that he might be confounded with the disciple of our Lord.

P. 14. l. 14. [*has been placed by subsequent research.*] Some writers, and particularly La Croze, have altogether rejected the account of the Apostle Thomas having preached the Gospel in India. They have confounded the dreams and fables of the Romish missionaries, with the true history of the life and martyrdom of that Apostle. But the number of native Christians now in India, unattached to the church of Rome, are a living evidence that the Christian Religion must have been introduced there in the first and purest age of the Church. The Saint Thomé Christians, who do not belong to the church of Rome, have been stated to be 70 or 80,000, and the Syrian Christians in communion with that church at 99,000.

P. 17. l. 10. [*opened a new direction to Asiatic commerce.*]—The following is a description of the commerce, and the channels through which it flowed, before the arrival of the Portuguese in India, taken from Faria y Sousa. Before these our discoveries, the spicery and riches of the Eastern world, were brought to Europe with great charge, and immense trouble.—The merchandise of the clove of Malucca, the mace and nutmeg of Banda, the sandal wood of Timor, the camphor of Borneo, the gold and silver of Luconia, the spices, drugs, dyes, and perfumes, and all the various riches of China, Java, Siam, and the adjacent kingdoms, centered in the city of Malaca in the Golden Chersonesus. Hither all the traders of the countries as far west as Ethiopia, and the Red Sea, resorted, and bartered their own commodities for those which they received: for, silver and gold were esteemed as the least valuable articles. By this trade, the great cities of Calicut, Cambaya, and Aden were enriched, nor was Malaca the only source of their wealth. The western regions of Asia had full possession of the commerce of the rubies of Pegu, the silks of Bengal, the diamonds of Narsinga, the cinnamon and rubies of Ceylon, the pepper and every spicery of Malabar, and whatever on the eastern islands and shores, nature had lavished

of her various riches. Of the more western commerce, Ormuz was the grand mart, for, from thence the commodities were conveyed up the Persian Gulph to Bassora, on the mouth of the Euphrates, and from thence distributed in caravans to Armenia, Trebisond, Tartary, Aleppo, Damascus, and the port of Barut, in the Mediterranean. Suez, on the Red Sea, was also an important mart. Here the caravans loaded and proceeded to Grand Cairo, from whence the Nile conveyed their riches to Alexandria; at which city, and at Barut, some Europeans, the Venetians in particular, loaded their vessels with the riches of the Eastern world, which at immense prices they distributed throughout Europe.

P. 20. l. 16. [*the jealousies and dissensions.*] A king of Persia, asked a Portuguese captain, how many of the Indian viceroys had been beheaded by the kings of Portugal.—— "None," replied the officer." "Then," returned the Persian, "you will not long remain masters of India."

P. 24. l. 10. [*under the title of Védas.*] The writings of the highest authority among the *Brahmíns* are the *Védas*, a word signifying in the *Sanscrit*, knowledge. These writings are believed to have been revealed immediately from Heaven to *Brahmá*, but to have been collected and arranged in their present order by a sage, who thence obtained the name of *Vyása*, that is, the compiler. He is said to have distributed them into four parts, which are entitled *Rich*, *Yajush*, *Sáman* and *At'harvaná*. The first of the *Védas*, is called the *Rigvéda*. It principally consists of prayers, which for the most part are encomiastic. It also treats of the science of divination: and is said to contain a very particular account of the formation of the world. The second *Véda* is distinguished by the title of the *Yajur véda*, and is divided into two parts, the *White Yajur véda*, and the *Black Yajur véda*. They principally treat of oblations and other religious ceremonies, such as fasts, festivals, purifications, and penances. The third *Véda* is the *Sámavéda*. This book treats of moral and religious duties, and a peculiar degree of holiness is attached to it by the followers of *Brahmá*; the derivation of its name indicating its efficacy in removing sin. The fourth *Véda* is the *At'harva-véda*, containing the whole science of theology and metaphysical philosophy. Doubts were entertained by Sir W. Jones and Mr. Wilkins, whether this last is not more modern than the other three; and several remarkable passages from other *Sanscrit*

writings of antiquity, have been brought to support this opinion: but Mr. Colebrooke has shewn, that the true reason why the three first *Védas* are often mentioned without any notice of the fourth, may be discovered in their different use and purport. The three first are constantly used at religious ceremonies; whereas the fourth consists of prayers employed at lustrations, at rites conciliating the deities, and at imprecations on enemies, and is therefore essentially different from the other three. "The *Védas*," say the *Hindus*, "are in truth "infinite; but they were collected by *Vyása* into their present number and order." A copy of the four Védas has been obtained by Colonel Polier, and has been deposited by him in the British Museum.

P. 25. l. 2. [*the writings of heretical sects.*] "I have met "with such quotations in the books of the *Jainas*, unattended by "any indication of their doubting the genuiueness of the origi-"nal, though they do not receive its doctrines, nor acknowledge "its cogency. I owe this to Mr. Speke among other fragments "collected by the late Captain Hoare, and purchased at the "sale of that gentleman's library."—Colebrooke on the *Védas*, Asiat. Res. vol. 6.

P. 25. l. 6. [*the Puránas.*] The *Puránas* are eighteen in number, derived from a word signifying in the *Sànscrit* language, *ancient*. The *Brahmèns* define a *Purána* to be "a "poem treating of five subjects; primary creation or creation "of matter in the abstract; secondary creation, or the pro-"duction of the subordinate beings, both spiritual and mate-"rial; chronological account of their grand periods of time, "called *Manwantarás;* genealogical rise of particular families, "especially those who have reigned in India; and lastly, his-"tory of the lives of particular families."

P. 25. l. 7. [*the other sacred writings.*] Among these may be reckoned the Institutes of *Menu*, a collection of sentences, comprehending the principles of *Hindu* law. These institutions are of divine force: and the work is thought by Sir W. Jones to have been compiled above thirteen centuries before the Christian æra. The *Gita* is also a metaphysical treatise of great value, forming an episode to the epic poem, called the *Mahábarat*.

P. 26. l. 2. [*by the unauthorized assumption.*] This was advanced by Sir W. Jones in his Preface to the Institutes of *Menu*. He says that the *Sanscrit* of the three first *Védas*, that of the *Manava Dherma Sastra*, and that of the *Purânas*, differ in pretty exact proportion, to the *Latin* of Numa, that of Appius, and that of Cicero, or of Lucretius, where he has not affected an obsolete style. He therefore assumes that the several changes took place in times very nearly proportional; that the *Védas* must have been written 300 years before the Institutes of *Menu*, and those Institutes 300 years before the *Purânas*.

P. 45. l. 17. [*however they might differ in calculations concerning the time.*] As the earth is not a perfect sphere, the quantity of matter is greater at the equator. Hence the earth turns on her axis in a rocking motion, revolving round the the axis of the ecliptic. This revolution, which causes the stars to appear to shift their places, is calculated by Newton to proceed at the rate of a degree in 72 years; according to which all the stars seem to perform their revolution in the space of 25,920 years: after which, they return to exactly the same situation as at the beginning of this period. The philosophers of the Egyptian and Greek schools believed, that the precession of the equinoxes proceeded after the rate of one degree in a century, and that the whole revolution of the fixed stars would not be completed under the period of 36,000 years. The Indian astronomers computed the precession of the equinoxes to be after the rate of 54 seconds in a year. From this motion they have evidently formed many of their calculations. They have a cycle, or period of 60 years, another of 3,600, and another of 24,000. But there is the strongest presumption, that the more early race of Indian astronomers were of the same opinion with those of Egypt and Greece: since, according to Mr. Reuben Burrow, the life of *Brahmá* himself consists of 36,000 of his days, that is cycles, which, in fact, constitutes the presumed period of the long revolution of the heavenly bodies, the Annus Magnus of antiquity. Mr. Colebrooke, in the 9th volume of the Asiatic Researches, mentions a passage from *Bháscara*, from which it appears, that though the more correct opinion of a revolution of the equinoctial points has been advanced by some authors, yet it has not obtained the general suffrage of writers on *Hindu* astronomy.

P. 52. l. 26. [*above six thousand years from the invasion of Alexander.*] Απο μεν δε Διονυσου, βασιλειας ηριθμεον Ινδοι ες Ανδροκοτον, τρεις, και πεντηκοντα, και εκατον· ετεα δε δυο, και τεσσαρακοντα και εξακισχιλια.—Arrian in Indicis.

P. 54. l. 26. [*a passage is literally quoted by Clemens of Alexandria from Megasthenes.*] Μεγασθενης, ο συγγραφευς τῳ Σελευκῳ τῳ Νικατορι συμβεβιωκως, εν τῃ τριτῃ των Ινδικων ωδε γραφει. Απαντα μεν ΠΕΡΙ ΦΥΣΕΩΣ ειρημενα παρα τοις αρχαιοις, λεγεται και παρα τοις εξω της Ελλαδος φιλοσοφεισι, τα μεν, παρ' Ινδοις υπο των Βραχμανων, τα δε, εν τῃ Συριᾳ ὑπο των καλουμενων Ιουδαιων.—Clem. Alex. Strom. l. 1.—Part of this passage is also quoted in the Præparatio Evangelica of Eusebius.

P. 56. l. 9. [*The principle on which this extravagant scheme is founded.*] The following sketch of the chronological scheme of the *Brahmáns* may not be unacceptable to those who are unacquainted with Indian literature. The age of the world is divided by them into four grand periods, which they call *Yugs*, the *Satya Yug*, or the age of purity and truth; the *Treta Yug*, or the age in which the third part of mankind became reprobate; the *Dwápar Yug*, or the age in which half the human race became depraved; and the present age, or *Cali Yug*, in which the whole of mankind became depraved or lessened. In each of these *Yugs* the length of human life is diminished, in a subdecuple ratio, from a hundred thousand years; in each, the number of *avatars*, or descents of the Divinity, decreases arithmetically, and the number of years decreases geometrically; and altogether constitute the extravavagant sum of four million, three hundred and twenty thousand years: which aggregate, multiplied by seventy one, is the period in which every *Menu* is believed to preside over the world. The reign of fourteen *Menus* constitutes a day of *Brahmá*; each *Menu*, they suppose, transmits his empire to his sons and grandsons during a period of seventy one divine ages; and such a period they name a *Manwantara*; but since fourteen multiplied by seventy one are not quite a thousand, we must conclude that six divine ages are allowed for intervals between the *Manwantaras*, or for the twilight of *Brahmá's* day. Thirty such days or *Calpas* constitute in their opinion, a month of *Brahmà*; twelve such months one of his years, and an hundred such years, his age, of which age they assert that fifty years are elapsed.

P. 58. l. [*the fourth æra, or the present age*] The beginning of the *Cali Yug* is reckoned from two hours, twenty-seven minutes, and thirty seconds, of the morning of the 16th of February, 3102 years before the Christian æra; but the time for which the astronomical tables of the *Hindus* are constructed, is 2 days, 3 hours, 32 min. and 30 sec. after that, or the 18th of February about six in the morning.

P. 62. l. 18. [*A second hypothesis that on the supposition*] The following is the substance of a paper, published in the Monthly Magazine for June 1796, on the antiquity of the Zodiac, After observing that the retrograde motion of the equinoxes takes place at the rate of one degree in 72 years, the author lays it down as certain, that the zodiac must have been invented and named at some period, when the solstice occurred during the Sun's stay in Cancer, and the equinox in Libra; the former alluding to the retrograde motion which the Sun seems at that time to assume, and the latter to the equipoise of day and night occurring at each equinox. The signs of the Zodiac then must have come into use, either about 900 years before the Christian æra, when the summer solstice fell in the 15th degree of Cancer, or about 13,860 years before the Christian æra, when the winter solstice fell in Cancer, and the vernal equinox in Libra. No intermediate period will account for the choice of these two emblems. After stating many facts, tending to shew the improbability of the latter, and more remote date, the author proceeds: Probably the whole Egyptian-nation, but certainly their civilizers came from the remote east, suppose Guzerat. The resemblance between the Colchians and the Egyptians, insisted upon by Herodotus, may best be explained by supposing them to have radiated from a common centre, farther east than Babylon. The lotos was consecrated by the Egyptians as a type of production, generation and fertility, while the only species of lotos adapted for this emblem, is to be found in *Hindustan*, and is so consecrated in the religion of that country. The Egyptians then had at least common instructors with the nations of the Deccan. As among these nations the same zodiacal signs, in the same order are introduced, the inference seems inevitable that all these things derive their origin from some primeval nation. The following extract from the *Ratnamálá* of *Sripeti* is found in Sir Wm. Jones's dissertation on the Indian Zodiac. "The *sheep*, *bull*, *crab*, *lion*, and *scorpion*, have the figures of these animals

respectively. The *pair*, are a damsel playing on a *Viná*, and a youth wielding a mace. The *virgin* stands in a boat in water, holding in one hand a lamp, and in the other an ear of rice.— The *balance* is held by a weigher with a weight in one hand. The *bow* by an archer, whose hinder parts are like those of a horse. The *sea monster* has the face of an antelope. The *ewer* is a water pot borne on the shoulder of a man, who empties it. The *fishes* are two with their heads turned to each other's tails; and all these are supposed to be in such places as suit their several natures." Now what should forbid detecting in this oriental zodiac, a natural calendar of some primeval nation, and constructed only 900 years before Christ? It will suffice to assign an hypothetical situation to this nation, in the Penjab, in the highest parts of the Sind, or the Ganges, where rice can be cultivated. The *ram* or the *lamb* (as the Persians call this sign) may have denoted the time for beginning to kill and eat the young sheep. The *bull* that of ploughing in the seed. The *pair* mark the age of growth. The *crab* is the solstitial period of summer. The *lion* extreme heat. The *virgin* is the time of sowing rice, which is performed by women, who lay the steeped grains on a plank, and let them fall into the water, in order that they may grow up in straight lines. The *balance* is the autumnal equinox now. The *scorpion* marks a period of contagion. The *archer* the season for hunting. The *monster*, half *antelope*, half *fish*, may express the passage of the year from a windy to a wet weather. The *bucket* describes the time for flooding the rice meadows; and the *fishes* the month of spawn.

P. 64. l. 5. [*Could the point be more unequivocally ascertained.*] It must be a matter of doubt, for instance, whether the sign *Libra* may have a reference to the equinox, or to the mensuration and weighing of commodities. If the hypothesis be just, that the zodiac was originally meant to designate a rural calendar, we should suppose the latter. In the description of the 36 *Dréschanás* translated from *Varahamihirás* treatise on the casting of nativities, entitled *Vrihat Iâtaca*, by Mr. Colebrooke; almost all the emblems are natural. The *Hindus*, like the Babylonians and Egyptians, divide each sign into three parts, and allot to every such part a regent, exercising a planetary influence under the particular planet whom he there represents. The sign Libra, in the first part of this triple division, is thus described [VENUS], " A man is proceeding along the middle " of a highway, holding a balance and having weights in his

"hand; he is skilled in measuring and meting, and meditates "on commodities and their prices."—Asiat. Res. vol. 9, p. 270.

P. 64. l. 5. [*The Egyptian asterisms are the most mythological.*] For a description of the asterisms of the oriental and other ancient spheres, see Maurice's Ancient History of Hindostan, vol. 1.

P. 86. l. 4. *They compute ten principal descents.*] Though the *Hindus* believe in innumerable descents, or special interpositions of Providence, yet they reckon ten principal *avatàras* or descents. They are thus described in order as they are supposed to occur, in the following ode of *Iayadéva*, the great lyric poet of India:

I. Thou recoverest the *Véda*, in the water of the ocean of destruction, placing it joyfully in the bosom of an ark fabricated by thee, O *Cesava*, assuming the body of a fish. Be victorious, O *Heri*, Lord of the Universe.

II. The earth, placed on the point of thy tusk, remains fixed, like the figure of a black antelope on the moon, O *Cesava*, assuming the form of a boar. Be victorious, O *Heri*, Lord of the Universe.

III. The earth stands firm on thy immensely broad back, which grows larger from the callus, occasioned by bearing that vast burden, O *Cesava*, assuming the form of a tortoise. Be victorious, O *Heri*, Lord of the Universe.

IV. The claw with a stupendous point on the exquisite lotos of thy lion's paw, is the black bee that stung the body of the embowelled *Hiranyacasipu*, O *Cesava*, assuming the form of a man-lion. Be victorious, O *Heri*, Lord of the Universe.

V. By thy power thou beguilest *Bali*, O thou miraculous dwarf, thou purifier of men with the water (of Ganga) springing from thy feet, O *Cesava*, assuming the form of a dwarf. Be victorious, O *Heri*, Lord of the Universe.

VI. Thou bathest in pure water, consisting of the blood of *Cshatriyás* the world, whose offences are removed, and who are relieved from the pain of other births, O *Cesava*, assuming the form of *Parasu Rama*. Be victorious, O *Heri*, Lord of the Universe.

VII. With ease to thyself, with delight to the genii of the eight regions, thou scatterest on all sides in the plain of combat, the dæmon with ten heads, O *Cesava*, assuming the form of *Rama-chandra*. Be victorious, O *Heri*, Lord of the Universe.

VIII. Thou wearest on thy bright body a mantle shining like a blue cloud, or like the water of *Yamuna* tripping towards thee through fear of thy furrowing ploughshare, O *Cesava*, assuming the form of *Crishna*. Be victorious, O *Heri*, Lord of the Universe.

IX. Thou blamest (Oh! wonderful power!) the whole *Véda*, when thou seest (O kind-hearted!) the slaughter of cattle prescribed for sacrifice, O *Cesava*, assuming the body of *Buddha*. Be victorious, O *Heri*, Lord of the Universe.

X. For the destruction of the impure, thou drawest thy scymetar blazing like a comet, (how tremendous!) O *Cesava*, assuming the body of *Calci*. Be victorious, O *Heri*, Lord of the Universe.

P. 90. l. 22. [*particularly those of India and China.*] De diluvio multa est apud Sinicos scriptores mentio, de illius origine causâque, nulla. Illud pro certo compertum, Sinensem de diluvio historiam non multum a Nöetico abesse, quippe quater mille circiter annos vulgarem Christi epocham prægreditur. Martinii Hist. Sinica, p. 12.

P. 92. l. 21. [*To pursue the subject farther.*] Among many passages of the *Sanscrit* records which refer to the deluge, and to other circumstances related in the Mosaical history, may be mentioned the following extract from the *Védas*. "But what "are they? Others yet greater, *Gandawas*, *Asuras*, *Racshasas*, "companies of spirits, *Pisachas*, *Urayas*, and *Gráhas* have we "seen been destroyed. But what are they? Others greater "still have been changed; vast rivers dried; mountains torn "up; the pole itself moved from its place; the cords of the "stars rent asunder; *the whole earth itself deluged with water*; "even the *sufes* or angels, hurled from their stations."——Sir W. Jones's Works, vol. 6, p. 420, 4to. ed.

P. 99. l. 20. [*Both Arrian and Strabo assert.*] See Arrian in Indicis. *Crishna* is worshipped at Mathura, even to this day, where the remains of his magnificent pagoda are still to be seen.

P. 100. l. 4. [*the incorporation of Christian heresy with Hindoo superstition.*] It is a point worthy of debate, whether Christian heresy has been most inclined to assimilate itself to Paganism, or whether Pagan superstition has drawn more largely from the source of corrupted Christianity. This ques-

tion may in some measure be resolved from the subject discussed. The argument will turn on two points; first, whether the *Purânas*, or the authenticated Scriptures of the *Hindus*, have been interpolated with passages from the spurious or genuine Gospels; secondly, whether the other legends of the *Hindus*, which Baldæus has related, were derived from the spurious Gospels, or whether the spurious Gospels may have adopted the fables current among the *Hindus*.——It may, I think, safely be denied, that the *Bhagavat Purâna* has been interpolated, with passages from either the genuine or the spurious Gospels. The *Purânas* may indeed have been interpolated; but not from this source. That the birth-place of *Crishna* was fixed at *Mathura* long before the Christian æra, has been observed above; nor will it invalidate the force of this argument, that the Gospel of the Infancy records *Matarea*, near Hierapolis, in Egypt, to have been the place where the infant Saviour resided during his absence from the land of Egypt, till the time that Herod died; and that the village of *Matarea* still remains unchanged in its name. Whether the account of the Gospel of the Infancy be worthy of belief or not, is foreign to the question. The express words of Arrian, who wrote so long before the birth of Christ, decidedly prove, that the birth-place of *Crishna* could not have been fixed at *Methura*, from any similarity between that word and *Matarea*. With respect to the circumstance of *Crishna*'s trampling on the serpent, it is well known, that the sculptured figure in the cavern of Elephanta representing this fact, is far older than the Christian æra; whether this proceeded from tradition, or from any other source, it is not material to enquire. As for the whole account of *Crishna*'s birth; the warning which was given to his father Cansa, that his son should be his destroyer; the alarm which the father felt in consequence of this intelligence; the resolution which he formed to destroy the child as soon as born; the manner in which the infant was preserved, by being entrusted to the care of a herdsman: all these circumstances, so far from proving that the *Bhagavat Purana* has been interpolated with passages from the spurious or the genuine Gospels, are, with a little variation, the same as the history of Cyrus related in Herodotus. These circumstances clearly shew, that the history of India has been mixed with that of Persia.—With respect to the second question, in what manner the resemblance has happened between the legends of the *Hindus* as given by Baldæus, and the spurious Gospels, a difference of opinion will probably arise. This resemblance is undoubtedly too ex-

act to be accidental. It is not determined, who was the author of the Gospel of the Infancy, which has been sometimes assigned to Manes. But as Irenæus, long before the time of Manes, had noticed and condemned this production, it must belong to some other author. It has been distinguished by the title of, The Gospel of St. Thomas; and although reprobated by the ancient fathers as unworthy of his name and character, we may fairly suppose it to have originated in some of those countries, in which that Apostle had planted the Christian faith. But if Manes was not the author of this production, it was no doubt circulated by him. The heresy of Manes, was compounded out of the Zoroastrian and Magian superstitions, together with certain perverted doctrines of Christianity. He propagated the notion of a relation between the character of Christ, and the mediatorial Mithras of the Persians; declaring him to have been the presiding genius over the visible world, and his throne to have been from eternal ages in the Sun. It is not therefore to be wondered at, that he should have wrested fables belonging to the Apollo of the Pagan world, and which could only relate to him, and have applied them to the author of the Christian Religion. I have always been induced to think, that the apocryphal Gospels bear evident marks of a design to engraft the adventures of Pagan Divinities on the Life of Christ: and that no actions recorded of Christ in the spurious Gospels, are to be accounted worthy of credit, unless supported by the authority of those which are esteemed canonical. The soberness of narration which characterises the latter, affords one of the strongest proofs not only of their veracity, but of their inspiration.

P. 122. Note. [*the Dabistàn.*] The *Dabistàn* is a literary curiosity of great value. "It has," says Sir W. Jones, "thrown such light on the ancient history of *Irán*, and of the "human race, as I had ever despaired of obtaining." The author himself, in his Preface, gives the following concise and simple account of it. "This book comprehends some-"what of the learning, philosophy, and religious opini-"nions of divers ancient societies of men. I have everywhere "endeavoured to distinguish the form of things from the sub-"stance, and as it made no part of my design, to overthrow "any particular doctrines, I have not been induced through "any improper bias, to deal either in exaggeration or detrac-"tion." The *Dabistàn* is divided into 12 chapters, or sections. Cap. 1, Of the Religion of the *Parsees*, Cap. 2, Of

the *Hindu* Religion. Cap. 3, Of the Religion of the *Tibetians*. Cap. 4, Of the *Jewish* Religion. Cap. 5, Of the *Christian* Religion. Cap. 6, Of the *Mohammedan* Religion. Cap. 7, Of the Sect called *Sadikyah*. Cap. 8, Of the *Unitarians*. Cap. 9, Of the Sect called *Rosheniuns*. Cap. 10, Of the *Divines*. Cap. 11, Of the *Philosophers*. Cap. 12, Of the *Susis*. Concerning the life of its author, *Mohsan*, but distinguished by the assumed surname of *Fani*, or *Perishable*, we have but few accounts. It is understood that he was of the sect of the *Susis*. His death is placed in the year of the *Hejira* 1081.

P. 184. l. 6. [*That the Brahminical system.*] The testimony of all the Greek writers is decidedly in favor of the priority of the religion of the *Védas*, to that of the heterodox *Hindus*. This is clear, because it was well known to the Greeks, that other classes existed in India besides the *Brahméns*. Strabo asserts (lib. 15) that there were two classes of philosophers or priests, the *Brachinanes* and the *Germanes*; but that the *Brachmanes* were holden in the highest estimation, because they were most consistent in their doctrine. But the account of the different religious systems prevailing in India, is still more clearly stated by Clemens of Alexandria. Διτλον δε τυπων το γενος, οἱ μεν Σαρμαναι αυτων, οι δε Βραχμαναι καλουμενοι, και των Σαρμανων οι Αλλοδιοι προσαγορευομενοι, ουτε πολεις οικουσιν, ουτε στεγας εχουσιν, δενδρων δε αμφιεννυται φλοιοις, και ακροδρυα σιτουνται, και υδωρ ταις χερσι πινουσιν· ου γαμοι, ου παιδοποιιαι ισασιν, ωσπερ οι νυν Εγκρατηται καλουμενοι. εισι δε των Ινδων οι τοις Βουδα πειθομενοι παραγγελμασιν· ον δι υπερβολην σεμνοτητος ως Θεον τετιμηκασι—Strom. Lib. 1.

P. 134. l. 13. [*even if a survey of the religious edifices in India.*] See a Paper by Capt. Mackenzie and Mr. Harington in the 6th Vol. of Asiatic Researches, of a temple near Caliture. This temple exhibits part of a very ancient edifice built entirely in the *Hindu* style, and decorated with sculptural figures of the Divinities of the *Brahméns*; and upon this edifice a structure, comparatively modern, has been raised in a style of architecture totally different, and surrounded with emblematical representations of *Buddha*.

P. 190. l. 20. [*The sect of Vishnu.*] The sect of *Vishnu* appears to have joined in the phallic worship, with the sect of Siva, until the latter introduced the worship of *Cali*, and the sanguinary rites that attended it.

P. 195. l. 3. [*The mystic word* Om.] The three mysterious words of, Κογξ, Ομ, Παξ, which were used at the conclusion of the mysteries of Eleusis, have long baffled all attempts at explanarion. They are interpreted by Le Clerc to signify "Watch and abstain from evil." These words are now found to be pure *Sanscrit*, and are used at this day, by *Brahmêns* at the conclusion of their religious ceremonies. The significancy of their connection, will not however, even now, appear very clear. They are thus written in the language of the Gods, as the Hindus call rhe *Sânscrit* language: *Canscha*, *Om*, *Pachsa*. *Canscha* signifies the object of our most ardent wishes: *Om* is the famous monysyllable used at the beginning and conclusion of a prayer: *Pachsa* exactly answers to the obsolete Latin word *vix;* it signifies change, course, place, fortune. It is used particularly after pouring water in honor of the Gods and *Pitris*.

P. 228. l. 22. [*The remarkable configuration of their hands.*] The same instruments which an Indian employs to make a piece of cambric, would, under the rigid fingers of an European, scarcely produce a piece of canvas.—*Orme*.

P. 230. l. 3. [*In those occupations which require perseverance without exertion.*] It is common to see the accounts of a huckster in his stall, who does not exchange the value of two rupees in a day, as voluminous as the books of a considerable merchant in Europe.—The peculiar patience of the Gentoos in Bengal, their affection to business, and the cheapness of all productions, either of commerce or necessity, had concurred to render the details of the revenue, the most minute, voluminous and complicated accounts, which exist in the universe; insomuch that the Emperor Iehangire (although the Mohammedans had been sovereigns of the country for three centuries) says in his note book, that the application of ten years was requisite to obtain a competent knowledge of them.—*Orme*.

P. 254. l. 10. [*We shall hear Mæcenas.*] Gibbon, misled by his admiration of the tolerant spirit of Paganism, seems to think that Dion Cassius, from whom this passage is quoted, has put these sentiments into the mouth of Mæcenas, to whose character they are by no means accordant. But Suetonius informs us, that Augustus enacted a law founded on this very principle. Sanxit ut priusqaam consuleret quisque, thure ac mero supplicaret, apud aram ejas Dei in cujus templo coiretur. —Sueton. Vit Augus. c. 35.

P. 282. l. 26. [*gained at first by undue compliances.*]—— Urbano Cerri, in his account of the Catholic Religion, mentions a Jesuit named *Robertus de Nobili*, who taught that every one should remain in his own caste, and by this policy made many converts. He also proposed to erect a seminary of Christian *Brahmêns*. But the See of Rome disapproved his design, and defeated his labors.

P. 305. l. 6. [*His opinion on the subject of Indian conversion.*] We may assure ourselves that neither *Mussulmâns*, or *Hindus*, will ever be converted by any mission from the Church of Rome, or from any other church; and the only human mode perhaps, of causing so great a revolution, will be to translate, into *Sanscrit* and *Persian*, such chapters of the Prophets, particularly of Isaiah, as are indisputably evangelical, together with one of the Gospels, and a plain prefaratory discourse, containing full evidence of the very distant ages, in which the predictions themselves, and the history of the divine person predicted, were severally made public: and then quietly to disperse the work among the well-educated natives; with whom, if in due time it failed of producing very salutary fruit by its natural influence, we could only lament more than ever the strength of prejudice, and the weakness of unassisted reason.—Sir W. Jones on the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India.

THE END.

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